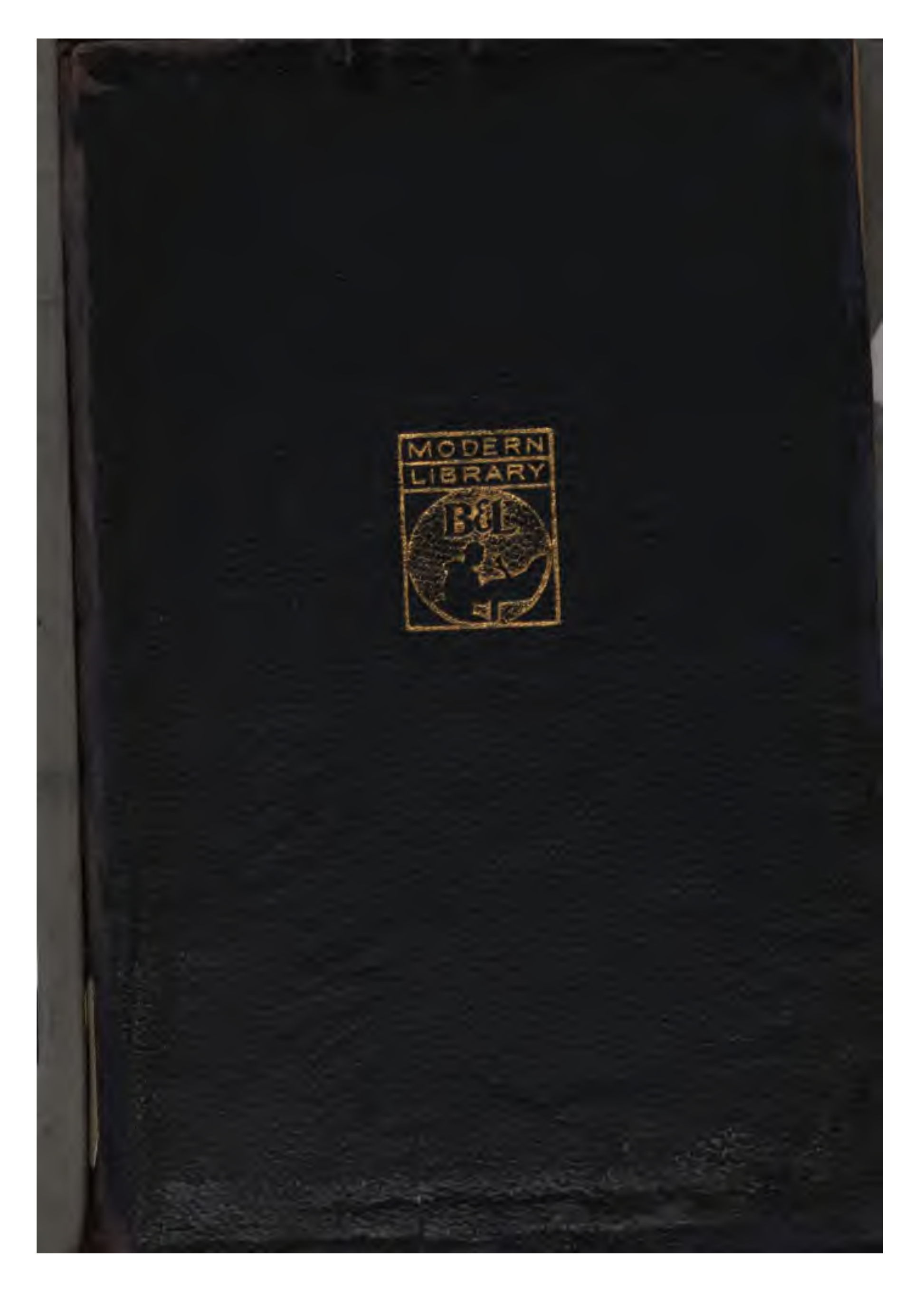

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SAPHO : MANON LESCAUT

BY

ALPHONSE DAUDET
ANTOINE FRANCOIS PREVOST



BONI AND LIVERIGHT

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FOR

MY SONS

WHEN THEY ARE TWENTY YEARS OLD







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SAPHO

MANON LESCAUT

SAPHO

I

"COME, look at me. I like the color of your eyes. What's your name?"

"Jean."

"Just Jean?"

"Jean Gaussin."

"From the South, I can see that. How old are you?"

"Twenty-one."

"An artist?"

"No, madame."

"Ah! so much the better."

These brief sentences, almost unintelligible amid the shrieks and laughter and dance music of a masquerade party, were exchanged, one night in June, by a bagpiper and a female fellah in the conservatory of palms and tree-like ferns which formed the background of Déchelette's studio.

To the Egyptian's searching examination, the piper replied with the ingenousness of his tender years, the recklessness and the sigh of relief of a Southerner who has been silent for a long while. A stranger to all that throng of painters and sculptors, lost sight of immediately after his arrival by the friend who had brought him, he had been sauntering about for two hours with his attractive fair face tanned and gilded by the sun, his curly hair close and short as the sheepskin costume he wore; and a triumph, which he was far from suspecting, arose and whispered around him.

Dancers jostled him roughly with their shoulders, studio fags laughed and jeered at the bagpipe slung over his shoulder and his mountain costume, heavy and uncomfortable on that summer night. A Japanese woman, with eyes suggestive of the faubourg, her high chignon held in place

by steel knives, hummed as she ogled him: *Ah! qu'il est beau, qu'il est beau, le postillon!* while a Spanish *novia*, passing on the arm of an Apache chief violently thrust her bouquet of white jasmine into his face.

He failed to understand these advances, imagined that he was cutting an exceedingly absurd figure, and took refuge in the cool shadows of the glass gallery, where a divan was placed against the wall under the plants. That woman had come at once, and taken a seat by his side.

Young, beautiful? He could not have told. From the long sheath of blue woolen stuff, in which her full figure swayed with an undulating motion, emerged two round and shapely arms bare to the shoulder; and her little hands laden with rings, her wide-open gray eyes increased in apparent size by the curious iron ornaments hanging from her forehead, formed a harmonious whole.

An actress without doubt. Many actresses came to Déchelette's; and the thought was not calculated to put him at his ease, as persons of that sort had great terror for him. She sat very near him, with her elbow on her knee, her head resting on her hand, and spoke with grave sweetness, with a touch of weariness in her tone. "From the South, really? And such light hair! That's an extraordinary thing."

Then she wanted to know how long he had lived in Paris, if the examination for admission to the diplomatic service that he was preparing for was very hard, if he knew many people, and how he came to be at that party at Déchelette's on Rue de Rome, so far from his Latin quarter.

When he told her the name of the student who had brought him—"La Gournerie, a relative of the author—no doubt you know him"—the expression of the woman's face changed, suddenly darkened; but he did not notice, being of the age when eyes shine without seeing. La Gournerie had promised that his cousin would be there, that he would introduce him.

"I like his verses so much! I shall be so glad to know him!"

She smiled compassionately at his innocence, with a pretty drawing together of the shoulders, and at the same time put aside the light leaves of a bamboo with her hand, and looked into the ball room, to see if she could not discover his great man.

The festivity at that moment was as animated and resplendent as the transformation scene of a fairy spectacle. The studio—the hall rather, for little work was ever done

there—extended to the roof, making one enormous room, and its light and airy summer draperies, its shades of fine straw or gauze, its lacquered screens, its multi-colored glassware, and the cluster of yellow roses which embellished the opening of a high Renaissance fireplace, were illuminated by the variegated, bizarre reflections of innumerable Chinese, Persian, Moorish, and Japanese lanterns, some in perforated iron carved like the door of a mosque, others in colored paper shaped like different fruits, others like open fans, flowers, birds, and serpents; and flashes of electricity, of a bluish tinge, would suddenly pale all those thousands of lights, and cast a frosty gleam, like a ray of moonlight, on the faces and bare shoulders, on all the phantasmagoria of dresses, feathers, spangles, and ribbons, jostling one another in the ball room, and sitting in tiers on the Dutch staircase, with its massive rail leading to the galleries on the first floor, which were over-topped by the long necks of the double basses, and the frenzied flourishes of the conductor's baton.

From his seat the young man saw it all through a network of green branches, of flowering convolvuli, which blended with the decorations, formed a frame for them, and by an optical illusion, in the constant motion of the dance, threw wreaths of glycine on the silver train of a princess's gown, and placed a head-dress of dracæna leaves above a Pompadour shepherdess's pretty face; and the interest of the spectacle was doubled now for him by the pleasure of learning from his gypsy the names, all renowned, all well known, which were concealed beneath those fancy costumes, so amusing in their variety and oddity.

That whipper-in, with his short whip slung saltire-wise, was Jadin; while that shabby country curé's cassock a little farther on disguised old Isabey, who had made himself taller by putting a pack of cards in his buckled shoes. Père Corot smiled from behind the huge visor of an Invalide's cap. She also pointed out Thomas Couture as a bull-dog, Jundt as a thief-catcher, Cham as a humming-bird.

Several serious historical costumes, a beplumed Murat, a Prince Eugene, a Charles I., worn by young painters, marked clearly the difference between the two generations of artists; the latest comers serious, cold, with faces of members of the Bourse prematurely aged by the characteristic wrinkles traced by absorbing financial pre-occupation; the elders much more boyish, mischievous, noisy and frolicsome.

Despite his fifty-five years and the palm-leaves of the Institute, the sculptor Caoudal as a hussar in barracks, his bare arms exhibiting his herculean biceps, a painter's palette dangling against his long legs in guise of *sabre-tasche,* was dancing a *cavalier seul* of the time of the Grande Chaumière; opposite the musician de Potter, in the costume of a muezzin on a spree, his turban awry, imitating the *danse de ventre,* and whining "La Allah, il Allah!" in a terribly shrill voice.

Those frolicsome celebrities were surrounded by a large circle, the dancers resting meanwhile; and in the front row stood Déchelette, the master of the house, wrinkling his little eyes, his Kalmuck nose, his grizzly beard, happy in the gayety of the others and highly entertained without seeming to be.

Déchelette, the engineer, a typical figure of artistic Paris ten or twelve years ago, very good-natured, very wealthy, with a taste for art, and that free-and-easy manner, that contempt for public opinion, which result from a life of travel and bachelorhood, had at that time a contract for a railroad from Tauris to Teheran; and every year, to recuperate after ten months of fatigue, of nights under canvas, of wild gallops across sandy deserts and swamps, he came to Paris to pass the very hot season in that house on Rue de Rome, built from his own plans and furnished like a summer palace, where he got together clever men and pretty girls, calling upon civilization to give him in a few weeks the essence of its most piquant and delicious products.

"Déchelette has arrived." The news spread through the studios as soon as the great linen shades which covered the glass front of the house were seen to rise like a stage-curtain. That meant that the fêtes were about to begin, and that they were to have two months of music and merry-making, of dancing and feasting, breaking in upon the silent torpor of Quartier de l'Europe at that season of villas and sea-baths.

Personally Déchelette took no part in the bacchanalian festivities that woke the echoes of his studio night and day. That indefatigable rake brought to his pleasures a cold-blooded passion, a glance vague and smiling, as if deadened by hasheesh, but of imperturbable calmness and lucidity. An exceedingly loyal friend, giving bountifully without counting, he entertained for women the contempt of an Oriental, compounded of indulgence and courtesy; and of those who came there, attracted by his great wealth and the joyous

eccentricity of the festivities, not one could boast of having been his mistress more than one day.

"A good fellow, all the same," added the gypsy, who gave Gaussin this information. Suddenly she interrupted herself,—

"There's your poet."

"Where?"

"In front of you, dressed as a village bridegroom."

The young man uttered an "Oh!" of disappointment. His poet! That fat, shiny, perspiring man, performing awkward antics in the false collar with two points and the flowered waistcoat of Jeannot. The despairing, piercing shrieks of the *Livre de l'Amour* came to his mind, the book that he never read without a quickening of the pulse; and instinctively he murmured aloud,—

"Pour animer le marbre orgueilleux de ton corps,
O Sapho, j'ai donné tout le sang de mes veines."[1]

She turned quickly, jangling her barbarian ornaments.

"What's that you say?"

They were lines written by La Gournerie; he was surprised that she did not know them.

"I don't like poetry," she said shortly; and she remained standing, with a frown on her face, watching the dancing and nervously toying with the beautiful lilac clusters hanging before her. Then, with an effort, as if forcing herself to a painful decision, she said "Good-night," and disappeared.

The poor piper was dumfounded. "What's the matter with her? What did I say to her?" He cudgelled his brains, but could think of nothing, except that he would do well to go to bed. He picked up his bagpipes with a melancholy air, and returned to the ball room, less annoyed by the gypsy's departure than by the thought that he must pass through all that crowd to reach the door.

The consciousness of his own obscurity among so many celebrities made him still more timid. They were no longer dancing, except a few couples here and there clinging desperately to the last strains of a dying waltz; among them Caoudal, superb and gigantic, with head erect, whirling around with a little knitting-woman in his red arms, her hair flying in the wind.

Through the great windows at the rear, which was wide open, entered puffs of early morning air with the white light

[1] To give life to the haughty marble of thy body,
O Sapho, I have given all the best blood in my veins.

of dawn, rustling the leaves of the palms, prostrating the flames of the candles as if to extinguish them. A paper lantern took fire, bobèches burst, and all around the room the servants were arranging small round tables as on the terraces of cafés. At Déchelette's the guests always supped thus, by fours and fives; and at that moment congenial spirits were seeking one another and forming groups.

There were shouts and fierce calls, the *"Pilouit"* of the faubourgs answering the *"You you you you,"* in imitation of a rattle, of the girls of the Orient; and conversations in undertones and the voluptuous laughter of women led away with a caress.

Gaussin was availing himself of the confusion to glide toward the outer door, when his student-friend, dripping with perspiration, his eyes like saucers, a bottle under each arm, stopped him: "Why, where in the deuce were you? I've been looking for you everywhere. I have a table and some girls, little Bachellery from the Bouffes—dressed as a Japanese, you know. She sent me to find you. Come quick!" and he ran off.

The piper was thirsty; then the wild excitement of the ball tempted him, and the pretty face of the little actress, who was making signs to him in the distance. But a sweet voice murmured close to his ear,—

"Don't go there."

The woman who had just been sitting by him was close beside him now, leading him away; and he followed her unhesitatingly. Why? It was not because of her personal attraction; he had scarcely glanced at her, and the other over yonder, who was calling him, adjusting the steel knives in her hair, pleased him much more. But he obeyed a will superior to his own, the headstrong violence of a desire.

"Do not go there."

Suddenly they both found themselves on the sidewalk on Rue de Rome. Cabs were waiting in the pale morning light. Street-sweepers, mechanics going to their work, glanced at that uproarious revel, overflowing into the street, that couple in fancy dress, a Mardi Gras in midsummer.

"To your house or mine?" she asked. Without stopping to consider why, he thought that it would be better to go to his house, and gave his distant address to the driver. During the drive, which was long, they talked little. But she held one of his hands in hers, which he felt were small and cold; and except for that icy, nervous pressure, he might have thought that she was sleeping, as she lay back against

the cushion with the wavering reflection of the blue curtain on her face.

The cab stopped on Rue Jacob in front of a students' lodging-house. Four flights of stairs to ascend; they were long and steep. "Shall I carry you?" he said with a laugh, but in an undertone, because of the sleeping house. She looked him over with a slow, contemptuous, yet tender glance,—the glance of experience, which gauged his strength and said plainly, "Poor little fellow!"

Thereupon, with a fine outburst of energy, characteristic of his age and his southern blood, he seized her and carried her like a child,—for he was a sturdy, strapping youth for all his fair girlish skin,—and he went up the first flight at a breath, exulting in the weight suspended about his neck by two lovely, cool bare arms.

The second flight was longer, less pleasant. The woman hung more heavily as they ascended. Her iron jendants, which at first caressed him with a pleasant tickling sensation, sank slowly and painfully into his flesh.

At the third flight he panted like a piano-mover; his breath almost failed him, while she murmured ecstatically, "Oh! *m'ami,* how nice this is! how comfortable I am!" And the last stairs, which he climbed one by one, seemed to him to belong to a giant staircase, whose walls and rail and narrow windows twisted round and round in an interminable spiral. It was no longer a woman he was carrying, but something heavy, ghastly, which suffocated him, and which he was momentarily tempted to drop, to throw down angrily at the risk of crushing her brutally.

When they reached the narrow landing, "Already!" she exclaimed, and opened her eyes. He thought, "At last!" but could not have said it, for he was very pale, and held both hands to his breast, which seemed as if it would burst.

The ascent of those stairs in the melancholy grayness of the morning was an epitome of their whole history.

II

He kept her two days; then she went away, leaving behind her a memory of soft flesh and fine linen. He knew nothing of her but her name, her address, and these words: "When you want me, call me—I shall always be ready."

The little card, dainty and perfumed, read:—

FANNY LEGRAND
6 Rue de l'Arcade

He stuck it in his mirror, between an invitation to the last ball at the Department of Foreign Affairs and the fanciful, illuminated programme of Déchelette's evening-party, his only two appearances in society of the year; and the memory of the woman, which hovered for several days around the fireplace in that faint, delicate perfume, faded away with it; nor was Gaussin, who was a serious, hard-working youth, especially distrustful of the temptations of Paris, conscious of an inclination to renew that *amourette* of a day.

The ministerial examination took place in November. He had but three months to prepare for it. After that would come a probationary term of three or four years in the offices of the consular service; then he would be sent away somewhere, a long distance away. That idea of exile did not alarm him; for a tradition among the Gaussins d'Armandy, an old Avignon family, demanded that the oldest son should follow what is called *the career,* with the example, the encouragement, and the moral protection of those who had preceded him in it. In the view of that young provincial Paris was simply the first port in a very long voyage, which fact prevented him from forming any serious connection, either by way of love or friendship.

One evening, a week or two after the Déchelette ball, as

Gaussin, having lighted his lamp and arranged his books on the table, was about to begin to work, some one knocked timidly; and when he opened the door, a woman appeared, dressed in a light and fashionable costume. He did not recognize her until she lifted her veil.

"You see, it's I. I have come back."

As she detected the anxious, annoyed glance he cast at the task awaiting him, she added,—

"Oh! I won't disturb you—I know what that is."

She removed her hat, took up a number of *Le Tour de Monde,* settled herself in a chair, and did not stir, being apparently absorbed by what she was reading; but every time that he raised his eyes, he met her glance.

And in very truth, it required courage for him to refrain from taking her in his arms at once, for she was very tempting and very charming, with her little face with its low forehead, short nose, sensual and kindly lip, and the mature suppleness of her figure in that dress, thoroughly Parisian in its faultless style, and less terrifying to him than her Egyptian costume.

She left him early the next morning, and returned several times during the week, always with the same pallor, the same cold, moist hands, the same voice trembling with emotion.

"Oh! I know perfectly well that I bore you," she would say to him, "that I tire you. I ought to be more proud. Would you believe it? Every morning, when I leave you, I swear that I will not come again; and then at night it seizes me again like an attack of insanity."

He gazed at her, amused, surprised, in his scorn of the woman, by that amorous persistence. The women he had known hitherto, met at beer-shops or skating-rinks, and, sometimes young and pretty, left behind them a feeling of disgust with their idiotic laughter, their cooks' hands, and with a certain vulgarity in their instincts and their speech which led him to open the window when they had gone. In his innocence, he fancied that all women of pleasure were of the same sort. So that he was amazed to find in Fanny a genuine womanly gentleness and reserve, with the superiority over the bourgeois women he was accustomed to meet in his mother's house in the province, due to a smattering of art, a familiarity with all sorts of subjects, which made their conversations varied and interesting.

And then she was musical, accompanied herself on the piano, and sang, in a somewhat worn and uneven but well-

trained voice, romanzas by Chopin or Schumann, provincial ballads, airs of Berri, Bourguignon, or Picardie, of which she had an extensive repertory.

Gaussin, who was mad over music, that art of indolence and of the open air in which the people of his province take such pleasure, was spurred on by music in his working hours, and found it deliciously soothing in his moments of repose. And from Fanny's lips it was especially delightful to him. He was surprised that she was not engaged at any theatre, and learned that she had sung at the Lyrique. "But not for long; it was too much of a bore."

There was no suggestion about her of the studied, conventional manners of the stage-performer; not a shadow of vanity or of falseness. Simply a certain mystery concerning her life away from him, a mystery not divulged even in the hours of passion; nor did her lover try to solve it, being neither jealous nor inquisitive, allowing her to arrive at the stated time without even looking at the clock, ignorant as yet of the sensation of suspense, of those violent blows of the heart against the breast betokening desire and impatience.

From time to time, the weather being very fine that summer, they set out on voyages of discovery among the charming nooks in the outskirts of Paris, with which her acquaintance was most precise and thorough. They formed part of the noisy multitude at some suburban railway station, breakfasted at a cabaret on the edge of a forest or lake, avoiding only certain too frequented spots. One day he suggested that they go to Vaux-de-Cernay. "No, no, not there; there are too many painters."

And he remembered that that antipathy of hers for artists had been the begining of their love. When he asked her the reason for it, she said,—

"They are crazy, inexplicable creatures, who always tell more than they know. They have done me a great deal of harm."

"But," he protested, "art is a noble thing. There is nothing like it to embellish, broaden one's views of life."

"Ah! my dear, the noble thing is to be simple and upright as you are, to be twenty years old, and to love dearly."

Twenty years old! you would have said she was no more than that, to see her so full of life, always ready, laughing at everything, pleased with everything.

One evening they arrived at Saint-Clair in the valley of Chevreuse the night before a holiday, and could find no room. It was late, and they must pass through a league of

forest in the dark to reach the next village. At last they were offered an unoccupied cot-bed at the end of a barn in which masons slept.

"Come on," she said with a laugh; "it will remind me of my days of poverty."

So she had known poverty!

They crept along, feeling their way between the occupied beds in the great roughly whitewashed apartment, where a night light was smoking in a niche in the wall; and all night long, lying side by side, they smothered their kisses and their laughter, listening to the snoring, the groans of weariness of their room-mates, whose cotton caps and heavy working-shoes lay close beside the Parisian girl's silk dress and dainty boots.

At day-break a wicket opened in the lower part of the great door, a ray of white light touched lightly the bed-cords and the hard earth, while a hoarse voice shouted "Ohé! time to get up!" Then there ensued a slow, painful commotion in the barn, once more in darkness; yawnings, stretchings, hoarse coughs, the depressing sounds of a room full of human beings just aroused from sleep; and the Limousins went away one by one, heavily and in silence, having no suspicion that they had slept in close proximity to a lovely girl.

After they had gone, she rose, put on her dress by feeling, and hastily twisted up her hair. "Wait here, I will be back in a moment." She came back in a moment with an enormous armful of wild flowers dripping with dew. "Now let us go to sleep," she said, scattering over the bed the cool perfume of the early morning blossoms, which revivified the atmosphere about them. And she had never seemed so pretty to him as she did standing in the doorway of that barn, laughing in the morning light, with her light curls flying and her riotous nosegay.

Another time they breakfasted at Ville d'Avray, beside the pond. An autumn morning enveloped with mist the placid water and the ruddy foliage of the woods in front of them; they were alone in the little garden of the restaurant, kissing as they ate their fish. Suddenly, from the rustic pavilion in the branches of the plane-tree at the foot of which their table stood, a loud, bantering voice called down to them, "I say, you people, when do you propose to be done with your billing and cooing?" And the lion's face and red mustache of the sculptor Caoudal peered through the opening of the little rustic chalet.

"I should very much like to come down and breakfast with you. I'm as bored as an owl here in my tree."

Fanny did not reply, being visibly annoyed by the meeting; Jean, on the other hand, accepted the suggestion instantly, for he was curious to see the famous artist and flattered to have him at his table.

Caoudal, very coquettishly attired in what seemed to be a *néglígé* costume, although everything was carefully studied, from the cravat of white crêpe de Chine to enliven a complexion seared with wrinkles and pimples, to the jacket fitting tightly to the still slender figure and the swelling muscles—Caoudal looked older than at Déchelette's ball.

But what surprised and even embarrassed him a little was the intimate tone which the sculptor adopted with his mistress. He called her Fanny, addressed her in the most familiar way. "You know," he said, as he placed his plate on their table, "I have been a widower for a fortnight. Maria has gone off with Morateur. I didn't mind it at first. But this morning, when I went to the studio, I found I was as lazy as the deuce. Impossible to work. So I left my group and came out to breakfast in the country. It's a wretched idea when one's alone. A little more and I should have cried into my stew."

He glanced at the Provençal, whose wavy beard and curly hair were of the color of the Sauterne in the glasses.

"Youth's a fine thing! No danger of any one leaving throwing his head back on her knees with both hands, she looks as young as he does."

"Saucy creature!" she exclaimed with a laugh; and her laughter rang with the fascination that knows no age, the youth of the woman who loves and wishes to be loved.

"Astonishing! astonishing!" muttered Caoudal, scrutinizing them both as he ate, with a contortion of melancholy and envy at the corners of his mouth. "I say, Fanny, do you remember a breakfast here—it was a long while ago, damme!—there was Ezane, Dejoie, the whole crowd, and you fell into the pond. We had dressed you up as a man, with the fish-warden's jacket. It was mightily becoming to you."

"Don't remember," she replied coldly and truthfully; for such changing, hap-hazard creatures never see aught but the present moment of their love. They have no memory of what has gone before, no fear of what may come after.

Caoudal, on the contrary, his mind dwelling on the past, punctuated with copious draughts of Sauterne the exploits

of his lusty youth, in love and drinking, picnic parties, opera balls, professional achievements, battles, and conquests. But when he turned toward them with the reflection of all the flames he had kindled gleaming in his eyes, he saw that they were not listening to him, but were picking grapes from each other's lips.

"How tiresome it must be to listen to what I'm telling you! Oh! yes, I am a terrible bore. Damme! It's a beastly thing to be old!"

He rose and threw down his napkin. "Charge the breakfast to me, Père Langolis," he shouted in the direction of the restaurant.

He walked sadly away, dragging his feet as if suffering from an incurable disease. For a long while the lovers looked after his tall figure stooping under the golden-hued leaves.

"Poor Caoudal! he certainly is getting heavy," murmured Fanny, in a tone of sweet compassion; and when Gaussin expressed his indigation that Maria, a harlot, a model, could find any amusement in the sufferings of a Caoudal and prefer to the great artist—whom?—Morateur, an obscure painter, of no talent, with nothing in his favor but his youth, she began to laugh, "Oh! you innocent! you innocent!" and throwing his head back on her knees with both hands, she buried her face in his eyes and hair as in a bouquet.

That evening Jean slept for the first time in his mistress's room, after she had tormented him to do it for three months:—

"Come, tell me—why you don't want to."

"I don't know—I don't like the idea."

"But I tell you that I am free, that I am alone."

Assisted by the fatigue of the excursion into the country, she succeeded in enticing him to Rue de l'Arcade, which was quite near the station. On the *entresol* of a plain, substantial house an old servant in a peasant's cap, with a sullen air, opened the door for them.

"This is Machaume. Good-evening, Machaume," said Fanny, throwing her arms around her neck. "This is he, you know, my beloved king; I have brought him to the house. Light everything at once, make the place beautiful."

Jean was left alone in a very small salon with low-arched windows hung with curtains of the same common blue silk with which the divans and several pieces of lacquered furniture were covered. On the walls were three or four landscapes, which lightened and enlivened the monotony of the

hangings; all of them bore a dedication: "To Fanny Legrand," "To my dear Fanny."

On the mantel was a half-size copy in marble of Caoudal's Sapho, which is to be found everywhere in bronze, and which Gaussin had seen in his father's study in his childhood. By the light of the single candle which stood near the base, he detected in that work of art a resemblance, refined and rejuvenated as it were, to his mistress. The lines of the profile, the movement of the figure under the drapery, the tapering roundness of the arms wound about the knees, were familiar, well known to him; his eye gloated on them with the memory of more tender sensations.

Fanny, finding him in rapt contemplation before the figure, said to him with an indifferent air: "There is a touch of me in it, isn't there? Caoudal's model looked like me." And she led him forthwith into her bedroom, where Machaume was sulkily laying two covers upon a small table; all the candles lighted, even those beside the mirror in the wardrobe door, a lovely wood fire, bright as a first flame, crackling under the spark-fenders,—the chamber of a woman dressing for a ball.

"I preferred to sup here," she said with a laugh.

Never had Jean seen such a daintily furnished room. The Louis XVI. silks, the light muslins of his mother's and sisters' rooms had nothing whatever in common with that downy, fluffy nest where the woodwork was hidden behind delicate satins, where the bed was simply a couch wider than the others, placed at the end of the room on white furs.

Delicious was that caressing touch of light, of warmth, of blue reflections prolonged in the bevelled mirrors, after their wandering through the fields, the shower they had encountered, the mud of the sunken roads in the fading light. But the one thing that prevented his enjoying that fortuitous luxury like a true provincial was the servant's ill-humor, the suspicious look with which she eyed him, so noticeably that Fanny dismissed her with a word: "Leave us, Machaume; we will wait on ourselves," And as the woman went out, slamming the door behind her, she added: "Don't take any notice of her; she's angry with me for loving you too well. She says that I am throwing away my life. These country people are so greedy! Her cooking, by the way, is better than she is. Just taste this *terrine* of hare."

She cut the pie, poured out the champagne, forgot to help herself in order to watch him eat, at every movement

throwing back to the shoulder the sleeves of an Algerian *gandoura,* of soft white wool, which she always wore in the house. She reminded him so of their first meeting at Déchelette's; and, crowded into the same chair, eating from the same plate, they talked of that evening.

"Oh! for my part," said she, "as soon as I saw you come in, I wanted you. I would have liked to seize you, to carry you off at once, so that the others shouldn't have you. Now tell me what you thought when you saw me?"

At first she had frightened him; then he had felt full of confidence, perfectly at home with her. "By the way," said he, "I never asked you why you got angry. Was it on account of those two lines of La Gournerie's?"

She frowned again, the same frown as at the ball, then said, with a toss of the head, "Nonsense! let us say no more about it," And with her arms around him, she continued: "The fact is that I was a little bit afraid, myself. I tried to escape, to recover myself, but I couldn't, and now I never can."

"Oh! never?"

"You will see!"

He contented himself with answering with the sceptical smile of his years, heedless of the passionate, almost threatening tone in which that "You will see!" was uttered. The pressure of her arms was so soft, so submissive; he firmly believed that he had only to make a gesture to release himself.

But why release himself? He was so comfortable in the cosseting atmosphere of that voluptuous chamber, so deliciously benumbed by that caressing breath upon his drooping eyelids, heavy with sleep, closing upon fleeting visions of golden woods, meadows, dripping mill-wheels, their whole day of love in the country.

In the morning he was awakened abruptly by Machaume's voice shouting unceremoniously at the foot of the bed: "*He* is here; he wants to speak to you."

"What's that! he wants to speak to me? So I am no longer in my own house, it seems! And you allowed him to come in!"

In a rage, she leaped out of bed and rushed from the chamber, half naked, her night-dress open.

"Don't stir, my dear, I will come back."

But he did not wait, nor did he feel at ease until he too had risen and was fully dressed, his feet safely in his boots.

As he was putting on his clothes in the hermetically closed

room, where the night-light still shone upon the confusion of the little supper, he heard the sounds of a terrific quarrel, muffled by the hangings of the salon. A man's voice, angry at first, then imploring, its outbursts ending in sobs, in helpless tears, alternated with another voice which he did not recognize at once, it was so harsh and hoarse, laden with hatred and with degrading words, reminding him of a dispute between prostitutes in a beer-shop.

All that amorous luxuriousness was marred by the incident, besmirched as if the silk were spattered with mud; and the woman, too, was degraded to the level of the others whom he had despised hitherto.

She returned to the room panting, twisting her dishevelled hair with a graceful gesture: "Is there anything so stupid as a man crying?" Then, seeing that he was up and dressed, she uttered an angry exclamation: "You have gotten up!—go back to bed—at once.—I say you shall." Then suddenly softened, embracing him with voice and gesture: "No, no!—don't go—you cannot go like this. In the first place, I am sure that you won't come back."

"Why, yes, I will. What makes you think so?"

"Swear that you're not angry, that you will come again. Ah! you see I know you."

He swore whatever she wanted, but would not return to bed, despite her entreaties, and her repeated assurances that she was in her own house, perfectly free as to her life and her acts. At last she seemed to be resigned to allowing him to go, and accompanied him as far as the door, with no trace about her of the female satyr in a frenzy, but very humble, trying to obtain forgiveness.

A long, clinging farewell caress detained them in the anteroom.

"Well, when shall it be?" she asked, her eyes buried in his. He was about to reply, with a falsehood doubtless, in his haste to be gone, when a ring at the door-bell checked him. Machaume came out of her kitchen, but Fanny motioned to her: "No, do not open the door," And they stood there, all three, motionless, without speaking.

They heard a stifled groan, then the rustling of a letter being pushed under the door, and footsteps slowly descending the stairs.

"Didn't I tell you that I was free? Look!"

She handed her lover the letter which she had opened,—a poor, miserable love-letter, very cringing, very cowardly, scrawled in haste on a café table, in which the poor devil

asked forgiveness for his madness of the morning, acknowledged that he had no right over her save such as she chose to accord him, begged her on his knees not to banish him irrevocably, promising to agree to anything, to be resigned to anything—but not to lose her, great God! not to lose her.

"Fancy!" she said with a wicked laugh; and that laugh finally closed to her the heart that she sought to win. Jean thought her cruel. He had not learned as yet that the woman who loves has no bowels of compassion save for her love; that all her active powers of charity, kindness, pity, devotion are absorbed for the benefit of one human being, a single one.

"You do very wrong to make sport of him. That letter is horribly pathetic and heartrending." And he added in a low voice, holding her hands: "Tell me, why do you turn him away?"

"I don't want him any more. I don't love him."

"But he was your lover. He provided this luxury in which you live, in which you have always lived, which is necessary for your happiness."

"My dear," she said in her frank way, "when I didn't know you, I thought this was all very nice. Now it is a bore, a disgrace; my heart rises against it. Oh! I know you will tell me that you're not in earnest about it, that you don't love me. But I make that my business. I will force you to love me, whether you will or no."

He made no reply, agreed to meet her the next day, and made his escape, leaving a few louis for Machaume, the drainings of his student's purse, to pay for the *terrine*. So far as he was concerned it was all over. What right had he to bring confusion into that woman's existence, and what could he offer her in exchange for what she would lose through him?

He wrote her to that effect the same day, as gently, as sincerely as he could, but without telling her that he had felt that their liaison, that pleasant, attractive caprice, had suffered a violent and fatal blow when he heard, after his night of love, that betrayed lover's sobs alternating with her own sneering laughter and her laundress's oaths.

In that tall youth, whose heart was far away from Paris, in the midst of the Provençal moors, there was a touch of the paternal roughness and all the delicacy of feeling, all the nervous temperament of his mother, whom he resembled as closely as a portrait. And to defend him against the allurements of pleasure he had in addition the example of a

brother or his father, whose dissipation and wild career had half ruined the family and endangered the honor of the name.

Uncle Césaire! With just those two words and the domestic drama they recalled, one might demand from Jean sacrifices much more painful than that of this *amourette,* to which he had never attached great importance. However, it was harder to break than he had imagined.

Although formally dismissed, she returned again and again, undiscouraged by his refusals to see her, by the closed door, by his inexorable orders. "I have no self-esteem," she wrote him. She watched for him to go to the restaurant for his meals, waited for him in front of the café where he read the newspapers. And no tears, no scenes. If he were with other men she contented herself with following him, watching for the moment when he should be alone.

"Do you want to see me to-night? No? Some other time then." And she would go her way with the gentle resignation of the peddler strapping up his pack, leaving him remorseful for his cruelty and humiliated by the lie he stammered at every meeting. "The examination was close at hand—he had no time. After that, later, if she still cared." As a matter of fact, he intended, as soon as he had passed, to take a month's vacation in the South, expecting that she would forget him in that time.

Unfortunately, when the examination was over, Jean fell sick,—a severe inflammation of the throat, caught in a corridor at the department, which assumed serious proportions as the result of neglect. He knew no one in Paris save a few students from his province, whom his engrossing liaison had estranged and scattered. Moreover, under the circumstances, something more than ordinary devotion was required, and the very first night Fanny Legrand established herself beside his bed and did not leave him for ten days, nursing him tirelessly, without fear or disgust, as deft as a professional nurse, with affectionate, coaxing ways, and sometimes, in his hours of fever, carrying him back to a serious illness of his childhood, so that he called her his aunt Divonne and said, "Thank you, Divonne," when he felt Fanny's hands on his burning forehead.

"It isn't Divonne, it's I—I am taking care of you."

She saved him from mercenary nursing, from fires stupidly allowed to go out, from draughts brewed in a concierge's lodge; and Jean was constantly surprised at the

activity, the ingenuity, the nimbleness of those indolent, pleasure-loving hands. At night she slept two hours on the couch,—a boarding house couch, as soft as the plank bed of a police-station.

"Pray do you never go home, my poor Fanny?" he asked her one day. "I am better now. You must go and set Machaume's mind at rest."

She began to laugh. A fine time she was having, was Machaume, and all the house with her. They had sold everything, furniture, clothes, even the bedding. All she had left was the dress on her back, and a little fine linen saved by her maid. Now, if he turned her away, she would be in the gutter.

III

"This time I think I have found what we want. Rue d'Amsterdam, opposite the station. Three rooms and a great balcony. If you choose, we will go and look at it when you leave the office. It's high up, fifth floor—but you can carry me. That was so nice, do you remember?"

Highly amused by the memory, she clung to him, nestled against his neck, seeking the old place, her place.

Their life had become intolerable in their furnished lodgings, with all that the term implies, the chattering of girls in nets and old shoes on the stairways, the paper partitions behind which other households swarmed, the promiscuous mixing up of keys, candlesticks, and boots. Not to her, certainly; with Jean, the roof, the cellar, even the sewer would have made a satisfactory nesting-place for her. But the lover's refinement took offence at certain associations, to which, as a bachelor, he had given no thought. Those one-night households annoyed him, seemed to cast dishonor upon his own establishment, caused him something of the same sadness and disgust caused by the cage of monkeys at the Jardin des Plantes, mimicking all the gestures and expressions of human love. He was tired of the restaurant too, of having to go twice a day for his meals to Boulevard Saint-Michel, a great room crowded with students, pupils at the Beaux-Arts, painters and architects, who, although they did not know him, had become familiar with his face during the year he had dined there.

He blushed, as he opened the door, to see all those eyes turned upon Fanny, and entered with the aggressive, embarrassed air characteristic of very young men accompanied by a woman; and he also was afraid of meeting one of the chiefs of his department, or some one from his province. Then there was the question of economy.

"How expensive this is!" she would say every time, running over the bill for the dinner, which she would carry away with her. "If we were housekeeping, I could run the house three days for that money."

"Well, what's to hinder us?" And they set about finding a suitable place.

That is the pitfall. Everybody falls into it, the best, the most honorable of men, by virtue of the instinct of neatness, the longing for a "home," instilled in them by early education and the genial warmth of the fireside.

The apartment on Rue d'Amsterdam was rented at once and voted delightful, despite its rooms *en enfilade,* of which the kitchen and living-room looked out on a damp backyard where odors of dishwater and chlorine arose from an English tavern, and the bedroom on the sloping, noisy street, shaken day and night by jolting vans and drays, cabs and omnibuses, by the shrill whistles of arriving and departing locomotives, all the uproar of the terminus of the Chemin de Fer de l'Ouest which displayed its glass roof of the color of muddy water directly opposite. The great advantage of the location was the knowledge that the train was close at hand, and Saint-Cloud, Ville d'Avray, Saint-Germain, and all the verdure-clad stations on the banks of the Seine almost under their balcony. For they had a balcony, broad and commodious, which retained from the munificence of the former tenants a zinc tent painted to imitate striped canvas, dripping wet and melancholy enough under the pattering of the winter rains, but a very pleasant place to dine in in summer, in the fresh air, as in a mountain chalet.

They turned their attention to the matter of furniture. Jean having informed Aunt Divonne, who was the family steward as it were, of his project of keeping house, she sent him the necessary money; and her letter announced at the same time the speedy arrival of a wardrobe, a commode, and a large cane-seated easy-chair taken from the *Chambre du Vent*[1] for the behoof of the Parisian.

That chamber, which he saw in his mind's eye at the end of a corridor at Castelet, always unoccupied, the shutters closed and barred, the door secured with a bolt, was exposed by its position to the full fury of the mistral, which made its walls creak like a room in a lighthouse. It was used as a store-room for old cast-off articles, for what each generation relegated to the past to make room for new purchases.

Ah! if Divonne had known what strange siestas would be taken in the cane-seated chair, what India silk skirts and flounced *pantalettes* would fill the drawers of the Empire *commode! But* Gaussin's remorse on that account was

[1] The Windy Chamber.

swallowed up in the numberless little delights of the be ning of housekeeping. It was such fun, after the o between daylight and dark, to set off arm-in-arm o voyage of discovery, and to visit some street in the faubo to select a dining-room outfit—the sideboard, the table, six chairs—or cretonne curtains for the windows and bed. He would accept anything with his eyes closed; Fanny scrutinized for two, tried the chairs, experimen with the leaves of the table, showed herself an experien shopper.

She knew the shops where they could buy at the of manufacture a complete kitchen equipment for a sn family, the four iron saucepans, the fifth glazed for the mc ing chocolate; no copper, because it takes too long to cle Six metal covers with soup spoons, and two dozen plates English ware, strong and bright-colored, all counted packed and ready for shipment, like a doll's tea-set. sheets, napkins, toilet and table linen, she knew a dea the agent of a great factory at Roubaix, to whom they cc pay so much a month; and as she was always watching shop-windows, on the lookout for bankrupt sales, for wreckage which Paris constantly washes ashore in its sc she discovered on Boulevard Clinchy, at second hand magnificent bed, almost new, and large enough for ogre's seven young women to sleep in a row.

He too tried his hand at making purchases as he retur from the office; but he knew nothing about it, could bear to say no or to leave a shop empty-handed. Going a second-hand place to buy an old-fashioned oil-cruet wl she had described to him, he brought away as a substi for the article, which was already sold, a salon chande with glass pendants, which was quite useless to them, they had no salon.

"We will put it in the veranda," said Fanny to con him.

And the pleasure of taking measurements, the discussi as to placing a piece of furniture; and the shouts, the laughter, the arms thrown up in despair, when they covered that, despite all their precautions, despite the complete list of indispensable purchases, something had forgotten.

For instance, the sugar-grater. Fancy their starting keep house without a sugar-grater!

Then, when everything was bought and put in place curtains hung, a wick in the new lamp, what a deli

evening was that first one in the new home, the careful scrutiny of the three rooms before going to bed, and how she laughed as she held the light while he locked the door; "Another turn; one more—lock it tight. Let us be sure that we're at home."

Thereupon began a new, delightful life. On leaving his work, he returned home at once, longing to be sitting by the fire in his slippers. And as he splashed through the dark streets, he imagined their warm, brightly lighted room, enlivened by its old provincial furniture, at which Fanny turned up her nose at first as rubbish, but which had turned out to be very pretty antique pieces; especially the wardrobe, a Louis XVI. gem, with its painted panels, representing Provençal fêtes, shepherds in jackets of flowered stuff dancing to the flute and the tambourine. The presence of those antiquated articles, familiar to his eyes in his childhood, reminded him of his father's house and sanctified his new home, whose comforts he was still to enjoy.

In answer to his ring, Fanny appeared, neatly and coquettishly dressed, "on deck," as she said. Her dress of black woollen stuff, without ornament, but cut by a fashionable dressmaker's pattern,—the simplicity of a woman who has worn fine raiment,—her sleeves rolled up, and a great white apron; for she herself did their cooking, and simply had a charwoman for the heavy work which chaps the hands or injures their shape.

She was very clever at it, knew a multitude of receipts, dishes of the North and South, as varied as her repertory of popular ballads, which, when the dinner was at an end and the white apron hung behind the closed door of the kitchen, she sang to him in her worn but passionate contralto.

Below, the street roared, a rushing torrent. The cold rain pattered on the zinc of the veranda; and Gaussin, in his easy-chair, with his feet stretched out to the fire, watched the windows in the railway station opposite and the clerks stooping to write by the white light of great reflectors.

He was very comfortable; he allowed himself to be coddled. In love? no; but grateful for the love with which she enveloped him, for that never-varying affection. How could he have deprived himself so long of that happiness, in the fear—at which he laughed now—of being bewitched, of assuming a yoke? Was not his life more respectable than when he used to go about recklessly from girl to girl?

There was no danger for the future. Three years hence, when he went away, the separation would come about nat-

urally, without any shock. Fanny was forewarned; they talked about it together, as about death,—a distant but inevitable fatality. There remained the great grief of his people at home when they learned that he did not live alone; the wrath of his father, that man of rigid principles and so quick to act.

But how could they find out? Jean saw no one in Paris. His father, "the consul," as he was called at home, was detained in Provence the whole year by the superintendence of his very considerable estates, which he cultivated himself, and by his hard battles with the vines. His mother was helpless, could not step or move without assistance, and left to Divonne the management of the house and the care of the two little twin sisters, Marthe and Marie, whose unexpected double birth had taken away her strength and activity forever. As for Uncle Césaire, Divonne's husband, he was a great child who was not allowed to travel alone.

And now Fanny knew the whole family. When he received a letter from Castalet, at the foot of which the little girls had written a few lines in their big handwriting with their little fingers, she read it over his shoulder, shared his emotion. Of her own previous existence he knew nothing, asked no questions. He had the attractive, unconscious egotism of his years, no jealousy, no anxiety. Full of his own life, he allowed it to overflow, thought aloud, laid bare his heart, while the other remained mute.

Thus the days and weeks passed in a happy tranquillity disturbed for a moment by a circumstance which moved them deeply, but in different ways. She thought that she was *enceinte,* and told him of it with such delight that he could not fail to share it. But at heart he was afraid. A child, at his age! What would he do with it? Should he acknowledge it? And what a pledge between himself and that woman, what a complication in future!

Suddenly the chain became visible to him, heavy, cold, and riveted about his neck. He did not sleep at night, nor did she; and, lying side by side in their great bed, they dreamed, open-eyed, a thousand leagues apart.

Luckily that false alarm was not repeated, and they resumed their peaceful, delightfully secluded life. Then, when the winter had passed and the real sun had returned once more, their little abode became still more charming, enlarged by the balcony and the tent. At night they dined there beneath the sky tinged with green and streaked by the whistling flight of swallows

The street sent up its hot puffs and all the sounds of the neighboring houses; but the slightest breath of fresh air was theirs, and they forgot themselves for hours, hand in hand, conscious of nothing. Jean remembered similar nights on the banks of the Rhone, and dreamed of distant consulates in the very warm countries, of a ship's deck, leaving the harbor, where the breeze would have that same long breath which fluttered the curtain of the tent. And when an invisible caress upon his lips murmured, "Do you love me?" he always returned from very far away to answer, "Oh! yes, I love you."—That is what comes of taking them so young; they have too many things in their heads.

On the same balcony, separated from them by an iron railing garlanded with climbing flowers, another couple billed and cooed, M. and Madame Hettéma, husband and wife, very vulgar persons, whose kisses resounded like slaps on the face. They were wonderfully well-mated in age, in tastes, in heavy build, and it was touching to hear those two mature lovers singing in low tones, as they leaned on the balustrade, old-fashioned sentimental ditties:

"Mais je l'entends qui soupire dans l'ombre;
C'est un beau rêve, ah! laissez-moi dormir."[1]

They appealed to Fanny; she would have liked to know them. Sometimes indeed she and her neighbor exchanged a loving, happy woman's smile over the blackened railing; but the men, as always, were more distant, and they never spoke.

Jean was returning home from Quai d'Orsay one afternoon when he heard some one call him by name at the corner of Rue Royale. It was a lovely day, bright and warm, and Paris was sunning itself at that corner of the boulevard, which has not its equal in the world at sunset on a fine day, about the hour for returning from the Bois.

"Sit down here, my handsome youngster, and have something to drink; it rejoices my eyes to look at you."

Two long arms had seized him and seated him under the awning of a café which encroached upon the sidewalk with its three rows of tables. He made no resistance, flattered to hear the throng of provincials, foreigners, striped

[1] But I hear him sighing in the darkness;
'Tis a lovely dream, ah! let me sleep.

jackets and round hats, whispering curiously the name of Caoudal.

The sculptor, sitting at a table in front of a glass of absinthe, which went well with his military figure and the rosette of an officer of the Legion of Honor, had beside him the engineer Déchelette, who had arrived the day before, always the same, sunburned and yellow, his prominent cheekbones crowding his good-natured little eyes, his nostrils greedily sniffing Paris. As soon as the young man was seated, Caoudal pointed to him with comic rage,—

"Isn't that a handsome animal? To think that I was that age once, and that my hair curled like that! Oh! youth, youth!"

"Still the same, eh?" said Déchelette, greeting his friend's tirade with a smile.

"Don't laugh, my dear fellow. All that I have, all that I am,—medals, cross, the Institute, the palsy,—I would give for that hair, that sunlike complexion."

Then he turned again to Gaussin in his abrupt way.

"And Sapho, what have you done with her? We never see her now."

Jean stared at him, failing to understand.

"Aren't you with her now?" And in face of his evident bewilderment, Caoudal added impatiently: "Sapho, you know —Fanny Legrand—Ville d'Avray."

"Oh! that's all over, a long while ago."

How came that lie to his lips? From a sort of shame, of disgust, at hearing that name of Sapho applied to his mistress; the embarrassment of discussing her with other men; perhaps, too, a desire to learn things which they would not otherwise have told him.

"What's that? Sapho? Is she still on earth?" queried Déchelette absent-mindedly, absorbed by the intoxicating joy of seeing once more the steps of the Madeleine, the flower-market, the long line of the boulevards between two rows of green bouquets.

"Why, don't you remember her at your house last year? She was superb in her fellah's tunic. And the autumn morning when I found her breakfasting with this pretty boy at Langlois', you'd have said she was a bride of a fortnight."

"How old is she, anyway? Since the days when I used to know her—"

Caoudal raised his head to reckon. "How old? how old? Let me see, she was seventeen in 1853, when she posed for my figure; now it's '73. So figure for yourself." Suddenly

his eyes kindled. "Ah! if you had seen her twenty years ago—tall, slender, with arching lips and a high forehead. Her arms and shoulders were a little thin still, but that was all right for the rough cast of Sapho. And the woman, the mistress!—the capacity for pleasure there was in her, the fire in that stone, that harpsichord in which not a note was missing! 'The whole lyre!' as La Gournerie used to say."

Jean, very pale, asked, "Was he her lover too?"

"La Gournerie? I should say so; I suffered enough on that account. Four years we lived together as husband and wife; four years I brooded over her and drained myself dry to gratify all her whims,—singing teachers, piano teachers, riding teachers, and God knows what. And when I had cut and smoothed and polished her into a fine stone, after picking her up out of the gutter one night in front of the Bal Ragache, that dandified poetaster came and took her from my house, from the hospitable table at which he sat every Sunday!"

He breathed very hard, as if to blow away the old love-rancor which still vibrated in his voice; then resumed more calmly,—

"However, his sneaking conduct did him no good. Their three years together were a perfect hell. That poet with his wheedling ways was stingy, ugly, a perfect maniac. You should have seen how they used to decorate each other! When you went to their house you'd find her with a patch over her eye, or his face all marked with claws. But the best thing was when he undertook to leave her. She clung to him like the itch, followed him about, burst in his door, and waited for him, lying across his door-mat. One night in mid-winter she stayed five hours in the street outside La Farcy's, where the whole crowd was. A pitiful thing! But the elegiac poet remained implacable, and one day he resorted to the police to get rid of her. Ah! he's a fine fellow! And as a fitting conclusion, a final acknowledgment to that lovely girl who had given him the best of her youth, her intelligence, and her flesh, he emptied on her head a volume of spiteful, filthy verse, of imprecations and lamentations, the *Livre de l'Amour,* his best book."

Motionless, leaning back in his chair, Gaussin listened, drinking very slowly through a long straw the iced drink in front of him. Surely it was some poison that had been poured into the glass and was freezing him from the heart to the vitals.

He shivered despite the splendid weather, saw shadows going and coming in a vague mist, a watering-cart standing in front of the Madeleine, and carriages rolling in both directions over the soft earth, as silently as over a pavement of down. There was no sound in all Paris, nothing save what was said at that table. Now Déchelette was speaking; he was pouring out the poison.

"What an atrocious thing such ruptures are!" And his calm, mocking voice took on a tone of gentleness, of infinite pity. "You have lived together, slept side by side, mingled your dreams for years. You have said everything, given everything to each other. You have adopted each other's habits, ways of acting and speaking, even each other's features. You are united from head to foot. In fact, you are husband and wife! Then suddenly you tear yourselves apart and separate. How is it done? How does any one muster courage to do it? For my part I never could. No; I might be deceived, insulted, besmirched with filth and ridicule, and if the woman should weep and say to me, 'Stay!' I wouldn't go. And that's why, when I take one, I never do it until dark. No to-morrow, as old France used to say—or else marriage. That is final and more decent."

"No to-morrow—no to-morrow. You say it very glibly. There are women whom a man doesn't keep just one night,—the one we're talking about, for instance."

"I didn't give her a minute's grace," said Déchelette, with a placid smile which seemed hideous to the poor lover.

"In that case you were not her style, or else—She's the kind of a girl who clings when she loves. She has a taste for domestic life. By the way, she's had poor luck in her housekeeping. She sets up with Dejoie, the novelist; he dies. She goes to Ezano, and he marries. After him came the handsome Flamant, the engraver, the ex-model—for she has always had a fancy for talent or beauty—and you know her horrible adventure—"

"What adventure?" asked Gaussin, in a choking voice; and he began again upon his straw as he listened to the love drama which stirred Paris to its depths a few years ago.

The engraver was poor, mad over the woman; and for fear of being abandoned by her, he made counterfeit bank-notes in order to maintain her in luxury. Discovered almost immediately and arrested with his mistress, he was sentenced to ten years' penal servitude, while she escaped with six months' detention at Saint-Lazare, her innocence being established.

And Caoudal reminded Déchelette—who had followed the prosecution—how pretty she was in her little Saint-Lazare cap, and plucky too, not whimpering, and loyal to her man to the end. And her reply to that old greenhorn of a judge, and the kiss she threw to Flamant over the gendarmes' chapeaux, calling to him in a voice to move the very stones: "Don't be discouraged, *m'ami*. The happy days will return, we will love each other still!" That experience had disgusted her a little with housekeeping, all the same.

"After that, starting out in *chic* society, she took lovers by the month or week, and never an artist. Oh! she's a little afraid of artists. I believe I was the only one that she continued to see. From time to time she used to come and smoke a cigarette at the studio. Then I passed months without hearing her name mentioned, until the day I found her breakfasting with this handsome child and eating grapes out of his mouth. I said to myself, 'Ah! my Sapho is at her old tricks.'"

Jean could listen to no more. He felt as if he were dying with all the poison he had absorbed. The shivering of a moment before was succeeded by a burning heat which scorched his breast, ascending to his buzzing head, which seemed on the point of bursting like white-hot sheet-iron. He crossed the street, staggering among the wheels. Drivers shouted at him. What was the matter with them, the imbeciles?

As he passed the Madeleine flower-market, he was annoyed by the odor of heliotrope, his mistress's favorite perfume. He quickened his pace to escape it, and thought aloud, in a heartrending frenzy: "My mistress!—oh! yes, a fine mess of filth. Sapho, Sapho! To think that I have lived a year with such a creature!" He repeated the name fiercely, remembering that he had seen in the newspapers, among other sobriquets of harlots, in the grotesque Almanach de Gotha of gallantry, Sapho, Cora, Caro, Phryne, Jenne de Poitiers, the Seal.

And with the five letters of her abominable name that woman's whole life passed before his eyes like refuse in a sewer.—Caoudal's studio, the fracases at La Gournerie's, the sentry duty at night in front of brothels or on the poet's door-mat. Then the handsome engraver, the counterfeiting, the assizes, and the little convict's cap that was so becoming to her, and the kiss she threw to her counterfeiter: "Don't be discouraged, *m'ami*." *M'ami!* the same pet name, the same caress as for him! What a disgrace! Ah! but he

proposed to make a clean sweep of those abominations. And still that smell of heliotrope pursued him through a twilight of the same pale lilac as the tiny flower.

Suddenly he noticed that he was still pacing the market like the deck of a ship. He hurried away to Rue d'Amsterdam without pausing for breath, firmly determined to drive that woman out of doors, to throw her down the stairs without explanation, hurling her insulting name at her back. At the door he hesitated, reflected, walked a few steps farther on. She would cry out, sob! howl through the house her whole sidewalk vocabulary, as she did once before on Rue de l'Arcade.

Should he write to her?—yes, that was the idea; it was much better, to settle her account in four words, very savage words. He entered an English tavern, deserted and dismal under the gas which was just being lighted, seated himself at a sticky table near the only customer, a girl with a death's head, who was eating smoked salmon, without drinking. He ordered a pint of ale, did not touch it, and began a letter. But too many words rushed into his head, struggling to come out all at once, and the thick, clotted ink would write them as slowly as it chose.

He tore up two or three beginnings, and was going away at last without writing, when a full, greedy mouth at his elbow inquired timidly: "Aren't you drinking? May I?" He made an affirmative sign. The girl pounced upon the pewter, and emptied it with a fierce gulp which disclosed the poverty of the wretched creature, having just enough in her pocket to satisfy her hunger, but not to water it with a little beer. A feeling of compassion stole over him and appeased him, enlightened him suddenly as to the miseries of a woman's life; and he began to reflect upon and judge his misfortune more humanely.

After all, she had not lied to him; and if he knew nothing of her life, it was simply because he had never cared about it. With what could he reproach her? Her time at Saint-Lazare? But she had been acquitted, and almost borne in triumph when she was discharged. What else was there? Other men before him? Did he not know it? What reason was it for being more disgusted with her, that the names of her lovers were well known, famous, that he might meet them, talk with them, see their pictures in the shop-windows? Should he attribute to her as a crime her having preferred such men?

And in the depths of his being there sprang to life an

unworthy, unavowable pride in sharing her with those great artists, in saying to himself that they thought her beautiful. At his age one is never sure, one does not know. One loves woman and love; but eyes and experience are lacking, and the young lover who shows you his mistress's portrait craves a glance, a word of approbation to reassure him. Sapho's face seemed to him embellished, surrounded with a halo, since he knew that she had been sung by La Gournerie, immortalized in marble and bronze by Caoudal.

But, his fury suddenly resuming possession of him, he left the bench on the outer boulevard upon which he had flung himself in his meditation, amid the cries of children and the gossip of workmen's wives in the dusty June evening; and he began to walk again, to talk aloud, angrily. Very pretty the bronze cast of Sapho,—bronze made for sale, exhibited everywhere, as trite as a barrel-organ tune, as that name Sapho, which, by dint of being bandied about for centuries, has become incrusted with obsence legends concerning her primitive charm, and from being the name of a goddess has become the label of a disease. Great God! how sickening it all was!

He gave vent thus, calm and furious by turns, to that maelstrom of opposing ideas and sentiments. The boulevard became darker and more deserted. There was a stale, acrid odor in the hot air, and he recognized the gateway of the great cemetery whither he had come the preceding year with all the youth of the quarter to attend the dedication of a bust by Caoudal on the tomb of Dejoie, the novelist of the Latin Quarter and author of *Cenderinette*. Dejoie, Caoudal! How strangely those names sounded in his ears since two hours ago! And how false and mournful the story of the girl student and her little household seemed to him, now that he knew the pitiful secret beneath it, and had learned from Déchelette the horrible nickname given to those sidewalk marriages!

The dark shadows, made darker by the proximity of death, terrified him. He retraced his steps, brushing against blouses that prowled about as stealthy and silent as birds of night, and soiled skirts loitering at the doors of brothels whose dirty windows were illuminated by broad shafts of light as from a magic lantern, in which couples passed to and fro and embraced. What time was it? He felt thoroughly exhausted, like a raw recruit at the end of a day's march; and of his benumbing pain, which had descended into his legs, naught remained but extreme weariness. Oh! to go to

bed, to sleep. Then, when he awoke, he would say to the woman, coldly, without anger: "Come—I know who you are. It isn't your fault nor mine; but we cannot live together any longer. Let us part." And in order to avoid her persecution he would go and embrace his mother and sisters, throw off in the Rhone breezes, in the free and life-giving mistral, the defilement and the terror of his ghastly dream.

She had gone to bed, tired of waiting, and was sleeping in the bright light of the lamp, a book open on the sheet in front of her. His entrance did not awaken her; and he stood beside her bed, gazing at her curiously as if she were a new woman, a stranger whom he had found there.

Lovely, oh! she was lovely; arms, throat, shoulders of a delicate amber, well formed, without spot or blemish. But on those reddened eyelids—perhaps it was the novel she was reading, perhaps the anxiety, the suspense—on those features relaxed in repose and no longer sustained by the fierce desire of the woman who is resolved to be loved, what weariness, what confessions! Her age, her history, her excesses, her caprices, her many marriages, and Saint-Lazare, the blows, the tears, the terror, all were visible, clearly displayed; and the violent rings of dissipation and sleepless nights and the curl of disgust on the drooping lower lip, as worn and fatigued as the curbstone of a well to which the whole village goes to drink, and the inchoate puffing which prepares the flesh for the wrinkles of old age.

That treachery of sleep, the silence that enveloped the whole scene, was grand and awful; it was like a battlefield at night, with all the horrors that one sees and those that one divines from the vague movements of the shadows.

And suddenly the poor child was seized with an intense, a suffocating desire to weep.

IV

They had finished dinner, the windows were open, and the prolonged whistling of the swallows hailed the fading night. Jean was not speaking, but he was on the point of speaking, and of saying the same cruel things which had haunted him and with which he had tormented Fanny since his meeting with Caoudal. She, noticing his downcast eyes and the air of feigned indifference with which he approached new subjects, divined his purpose and anticipated it.

"Come, I know what you're going to say to me; spare us both, I beg you; one gets exhausted at last. As long as all that is dead and gone, as I love only you, as you are the only man in the world to me—"

"If all that past were dead and gone, as you say," and he looked into the depths of her lovely eyes, of a quivering gray that changed with every new impression, "you would not keep the things that remind you of it; yes, up there in the cupboard."

The gray became a velvety black.

"You know, then?

All that medley of love letters, portraits, those glorious archives of gallantry saved from so many catastrophes, she must at last make up her mind to destroy!

"You will at least believe me afterward?"

And as he replied with an incredulous smile of suspicion, she ran to fetch the lacquer casket with the carved iron work, lying among the piles of fine linen, which had puzzled her lover so for some days.

"Burn them; tear them up; they are yours."

But he did not hurry to turn the little key, gazing at the cherry-trees with pink pearl fruit, and the flying storks carved on the lid, which he at last broke open without ceremony. Colored paper of all sizes and covered with all kinds of writing, with designs in gilt at the top, old yellow letters broken at the folds, pencil scrawls on leaves from note-books, visiting-cards in heaps, with no semblance of order, as in a drawer often searched and tossed about, into which he himself now plunged his trembling hands.

"Give them to me. I will burn them before your eyes."

She spoke feverishly, crouching before the fire-place a lighted candle on the floor by her side.

"Give them to me."

But he replied, "No—wait," and added in a lower tone, as if ashamed, "I would like to read them."

"What for? You will only make yourself still more unhappy."

She thought solely of his sufferings, and not of the indelicacy of thus laying bare the secrets of passion, the confessions made on the pillow of all those men who had loved her; drawing near to him, still on her knees, she read with him, watching him out of the corner of her eye.

Ten pages, signed La Gournerie, 1861, in a long, feline handwriting, in which the poet, who had been sent to Algeria to prepare an official and at the same time poetical account of the journey of the emperor and empress, gave his mistress a dazzling description of the festivities.

Algiers, overflowing with swarming thousands, a genuine Bagdad of the Thousand and One Nights; all Africa heaped up around the city, beating at its gates as if it would break them down, like a simoom. Caravans of negroes and camels laden with gum, tents of skins, an odor of human musk hovering over all that monkeyish multitude, camping on the seashore, dancing at night around great fires, making way respectfully every morning for the chiefs from the South, who arrived, like Magian kings, with oriental pomp, discordant music, reed flutes, hoarse little drums, the *goum*[1] surrounding the tri-colored standard of the Prophet; and behind, led by negroes, the horses intended as a present to the *Emberour*, caparisoned in silk and silver with a jingling of bells and chains at every step.

The poet's genius made the scene very lifelike and vivid; the words gleamed on the page, like unmounted stones which jewellers examine on paper. Truly the woman at whose feet such treasurers were cast might be well proud. Surely he must have loved her, for, notwithstanding the interest aroused by the singularity of the festivities, the poet thought only of her, was dying for a sight of her.

"Oh! last night I was with you on the great divan at Rue de l'Arcade. You were wild with ecstasy under my caresses; then I abruptly awoke rolled in a rug on my terrace under

[1] An Arabian word, used in connection with the French army *in Algiers to denote the* contingent of troops furnished by each *native tribe.*

the starry sky. The cry of the muezzin ascended from a neighboring minaret, in a clear and limpid outpouring of sounds, voluptuous rather than prayerful, and it seemed to be your voice that I heard as I emerged from my dream."

What evil power impelled him to continue his reading despite the horrible jealousy that whitened his lips, contracted his hands? Gently, coaxingly, Fanny tried to take the letter from him; but he read it to the end, and after it another, then another, letting them fall one by one with a gesture of contempt and indifference, without looking at the flame in the fireplace feeding on the great poet's impassioned lyrical effusions. And sometimes, in the overflow of that passion, exaggerated by the tropical temperature, the lover's poetic flights were sullied by some vile mess-room obscenity which would have surprised and scandalized the fair readers of the *Livre de l'Amour,* whose spirituality was as refined and spotless as the Jungfrau's silvery peak.

To what depths of baseness the heart will stoop! Jean dwelt longest upon those passages, those blots upon the page, with no suspicion of the nervous spasm that distorted his features each time. He even had the courage to emit a sneering laugh at this postscript, following a vivid description of a fête at Aïssaouas: "I have read my letter over; there are some things in it that really are not bad; put it aside for me, I may be able to make some use of it."

"A gentleman who threw away no chances!" he exclaimed as he passed to another letter in the same hand, wherein, in the frigid tone of a man of business, La Gournerie demanded the return of a collection of Arabian ballads and a pair of Turkish slippers made of rice-straw. That was the liquidation of their liaison. Ah! he had known how to leave her; he was clever, that fellow!

And Jean, without pausing, continued to drain that bog, from which a hot, unhealthy vapor arose. When it grew dark he placed the candle on a table and ran through a multitude of short notes, almost illegible, as if written with a bodkin by fingers which were too large for it, and which, every moment or two, in an outburst of desire or of anger, gashed and tore the paper. The early days of her liaison with Caoudal, assignations, suppers, parties in the country; and altercations, importunate repentance, shrieks, base, degrading billingsgate, abruptly interlarded with amusing, laughable sallies, sobbing reproaches, a revelation of all the *great artist's* weakness when face to face with separation and desertion.

The fire seized upon it and licked it with long red tongues in which the flesh and blood and tears of a man of genius smoked and crackled; but what mattered that to Fanny, whose whole heart now belonged to the young lover whom she was watching, whose burning fever scorched her through their clothing? He had found a pen portrait signed Gavarni, with this dedication: "To my friend Fanny Legrand, in an inn at Dampierre, one rainy day." An intelligent, sorrowful face, with hollow eyes, an expression of bitterness and despair.

"Who is that?"

"André Dejoie. I prized it because of the signature."

He said, "Keep it, I have no objection;" but in such a constrained, unhappy tone that she took the sketch, tore it in pieces, and threw it into the fire, while he plunged into the novelist's correspondence, a heartrending succession of letters, dated at winter seashore resorts, at watering-places, in which the writer, sent thither for his health, cried out in despair at his mental and physical distress, cudgelling his brain to find an idea at that distance from Paris, and mingled with requests for potions and prescriptions, with anxieties concerning money or business, advices of the forwarding of proofs, of renewals of notes, and always the same cry of despair and adoration addressed to his Sapho's lovely body, which was prohibited by his physicians.

"In God's name, what was the matter with them all that they were mad after you like that?" muttered Jean, distracted but outspoken.

To him that was the only thought suggested by those despairing letters, avowing the utter upheaval of one of those glorious existences which young men envy and of which romantic women dream. What was the matter with them all? What did she give them to drink? He experienced the horrible agony of a man who, being bound and helpless, should see the woman he loved outraged before his eyes; and yet he could not make up his mind to empty the box at one stroke, with his eyes closed.

Now it was the turn of the engraver, who, wretchedly poor and obscure as he was, with no other celebrity than that afforded by the *Gazette des Tribunaux,* owed his place in the reliquary solely to the great love she had had for him. Very degrading were those letters from Mazas, and stupid, clumsy, sentimental, like those of a soldier to his country sweetheart. But beneath the romantic commonplaces one was conscious of an accent of sincerity in his passion, a

respect for the woman, a forgetfulness of self which distinguished him from the others; for instance, when he asked Fanny's pardon for the crime of loving her too dearly, or when, from the waiting-room at the Palais de Justice, immediately after his conviction, he told his mistress of his joy to know that she was acquitted and free. He complained of nothing. Thanks to her, he had had two years of such perfect, profound happiness with her that the memory of it would suffice to fill his life with joy, to mitigate the horror of his lot; and he ended by asking a favor,—

"You know that I have a child in the provinces whose mother died a long while ago; he lives with an old aunt, in such an out-of-the-way corner that they will never hear of my trouble. I have sent them what money I had left, saying that I was going on a long journey, and I rely on you, my dear Nini, to inquire about the poor little fellow from time to time and let me know about him."

Fanny's interest was demonstrated by another letter, of quite recent date, hardly six months old: "Oh! you were good to come. How lovely you were! How sweet you smelt beside my convict's jacket, which made me so ashamed—"

"So you have continued to see him?" demanded Jean fiercely, interrupting his reading.

"At long intervals, as an act of charity."

"Even since we have been together?"

"Yes, once, only once, in the visitors' room; nobody can see them anywhere else."

"Ah! you're a fine girl!"

The thought that, notwithstanding their liaison she had visited that counterfeiter, exasperated him more than all the rest. He was too proud to say so.

But a package of letters, the last, tied with a blue ribbon and written in a fine, sloping hand, a woman's hand, unchained all his wrath.

"I change my tunic after the chariot race—come to my dressing-room."

"No, no—don't read that."

She threw herself upon him, snatched away the whole package and threw it into the fire; nor did he understand at first, even when he saw her at his knees, her face flushed by the reflection of the fire and the shame of her confession.

"I was *young: it* was Caoudal, the great fool. I did what *he wanted.*"

Not till then did he understand, and he turned pale as death.

"Oh! yes—Sapho—'the whole lyre.'" And pushing her away with his foot, like an unclean beast, he added: "Leave me! Don't touch me! You make me sick!"

Her shriek was drowned by a terrible peal of thunder, very near and prolonged, at the same instant that a vivid flash illuminated the room. Fire! She sprang to her feet in terror, instinctively seized the caráfe that stood on the table and emptied it on the mass of papers which had set fire to the winter's soot; then the watering-pot and the pitchers; and seeing that she was helpless, that the flames were shooting out into the room, she ran to the balcony, crying, "Fire! fire!"

The Hettémas arrived first, then the concierge and the police.

"Lower the fire-board!" they cried; "go up on the roof! Water! water! No, a blanket!"

They gazed in dismay at their invaded, bedraggled home; and when the alarm was at an end, and the fire extinguished, when the black crowd under the gas-lights in the street below had dispersed, and their neighbors had returned to their own apartment with their minds at ease, the two lovers, left amid that chaos of water, muddy soot, overturned, drenched furniture, felt sick at heart and cowardly, without strength to renew their quarrel or to put the room in order. Something ominous and degrading had entered their life; and that night, forgetting their former repugnance, they slept at the lodging-house.

Fanny's sacrifice was destined to be of no avail. Of those burned, vanished letters, whole passages which he knew by heart haunted the lover's memory, rose to his cheeks in waves of blood, like certain passages in unclean books. And those former lovers of his mistress were almost all famous men. The dead survived; the portraits and names of the living were seen everywhere; people talked of them before him, and every time he had a feeling of oppression as of a family tie painfully severed.

As his trouble sharpened his wits and his eyes, he soon began to detect in Fanny the marks of early influences, and the expressions, the ideas, the habits which she had retained. That fashion of putting out the thumb as if she were shaping, moulding the object of which she was speaking, with a *"You can see it from here,"* belonged to the sculptor. From

Dejoie she had borrowed the mania for long words, and the popular ballads of which he had published a collection famous in every corner of France; from La Gournerie, his haughty, contemptuous tone and his severe judgments concerning modern literature.

She had assimilated it all, heaping incongruity upon incongruity, by the same phenomenon of stratification which makes it possible to ascertain the age and revolutions of the earth at its different geological periods; and perhaps she was not so intelligent as she had seemed to him at first. But intelligence was of small consequence; though she had been the stupidest of women, vulgar, and ten years older than she really was, she would have held him by the power of her past, by that base jealousy which gnawed his vitals; and he no longer imposed silence upon its irritation or its rancorous hatred, but burst out on every occasion against one or the other of her lovers.

There was no sale for Dejoie's novels; any one of them could be bought on the quay for twenty-five centimes. And to think of that old fool of a Caoudal persisting in making love at his age! "He hasn't any teeth, you know; I watched him at that breakfast at Ville d'Avray. He eats in the front of his mouth, like a goat." His talent was all gone too. What a dead failure his *Female Faun* was at the last Salon! "It was no good." That "it was no good," was an expression which he got from her, and which she herself retained from her intimacy with the sculptor. When he attacked in that way one of his past rivals, Fanny chimed in with him; and you should have heard that youngster, ignorant of art, of life, of everything, and that superficial girl, who had rubbed off a little wit in her contact with those famous artists, pass judgment on them from a superior level, and condemn them oracularly.

But Gaussin's special antipathy was Flamant the engraver. Of him he knew nothing save that he was handsome, as fair of complexion as himself, that she called him *"m'ami,"* that she went to see him in prison, and that, when he attacked him as he did the others, calling him the "Sentimental Convict," or the "Pretty Recluse," Fanny turned her face away without a word. Erelong he accused his mistress of retaining a fond feeling for that brigand, and she was forced to explain herself, gently but with decision.

"You know perfectly well that I no longer love him, Jean *since I love you.* I don't go there now, I don't answer his *letters; but you* will never make me speak ill of the m

who loved me to madness, to crime." At that frank avowal, voicing the best sentiment that she possessed, Jean did not protest, but he was devoured by a jealous hatred, sharpened by distrust, which led him to return sometimes to Rue d'Amsterdam unexpectedly at midday. "Suppose she had gone to see him!"

He always found her at home, sitting idle in their little apartment, like an Oriental, or else at the piano giving a lesson in singing to their stout neighbor, Madame Hettéma. They had formed an intimacy since that night of the fire with those good people, placid and plethoric souls who lived in a perpetual current of fresh air, with doors and windows open.

.The husband, a draughtsman at the Artillery Museum, brought his work home with him, and every evening in the week and all day Sunday he could be seen leaning over his great table, in his shirt-sleeves, puffing and perspiring, waving his hands tc make the air circulate, with his beard almost to his eyes. His stout wife, sitting beside him in a dressing-sack, also melted with the heat, although she never did anything; and at intervals they would strike up one of their favorite duets to cool their blood.

The two households were soon on an intimate footing. About ten in the morning Hettéma's loud voice would be heard at the door: "Are you there, Gaussin?" And as their departments lay in the same direction, they kept each other company. The draughtsman—a heavy, vulgar creature, several rungs lower on the social ladder than his young companion—said but little, talked as thick as if he had as much beard in his mouth as on his cheeks; but you felt that he was an honest fellow, and Jean's moral disorganization needed just such an association. He clung to it especially because of his mistress, who was living in a solitude peopled with memories and regrets more dangerous, perhaps, than the connections she had voluntarily renounced, and who found in Madame Hettéma, constantly engrossed with her man's welfare, with the toothsome surprise she was preparing for his dinner, and with the new air she would sing to him at dessert, a welcome and wholesome acquaintance.

But when the friendship proceeded so far as an exchange of invitations, he had scruples. Those people doubtless believed that they were married, his conscience refused to prolong the deception, and he told Fanny to tell her friend, so that there might be no misunderstanding. That made her

laugh heartily. Poor *bébé!* no one was ever so innocent as he. "Why, they have never for one moment believed that we were married. And little they care about it! If you knew where he went to get his wife. All that I ever did was worthy of Saint-Jean in comparison. He married her only so that he might have her all to himself, and the past troubles him very little, you see."

He could not believe it. An ex-prostitute, that good old soul, with the bright eyes, the childlike smile on her soft, fat face, the drawling provincialisms, for whom romanzas were never sentimental enough, nor language too distinguished; and he, the man, so placid, so secure in his amorous well-being! He watched him as he walked at his side, with his pipe between his teeth, with little sighs of beatitude, while he himself was always deep in thought, devouring himself with impotent rage.

"You will get over it, *m'ami,*" Fanny would say gently in the hours when they told each other everything; and she would soothe him, as affectionate and charming as on the first day, but with the addition of a sort of recklessness which Jean could not define.

It was her freer manner, her fashion of expressing herself, a consciousness of her own power, strange confidences, for which he did not ask, concerning her past life, her dissipation, the wild peaks of her curiosity. She no longer abstained from smoking, rolling in her fingers the everlasting cigarette which shortens the day for women of her sort, and leaving it about on all the furniture; and in their discussions she put forth the most cynical theories concerning life in general, the infamy of men, the roguery of women. Even the expression of her eyes changed, made heavy by a vapor as of sleeping water through which flashed the lightning of a wanton laugh.

And the private manifestations of their passion likewise underwent a transformation. Reserved at the outset on account of the youth of her lover, whose first illusion she respected, the woman threw off all restraint after she had seen of her abandoned past the effect upon that child, when it was suddenly disclosed to him, and the swamp fever she had kindled in his blood. And she gave free rein to the diabolical caresses she had so long held in check, to all the delirious words her clenched teeth had arrested, displayed herself without reserve in all the plenitude of her charms as an amorous, accomplished courtesan, in all the horrible glory of Sapho.

Modesty, reserve, of what use were they? Men are all alike; crazy after vice and corruption,—that little fellow, like the rest. To tempt them with what they love is the best way to retain one's hold on them. And all that she knew, all the forms of depravity in pleasure with which she had been inoculated, Jean learned in his turn, to pass them on to others. Thus the poison circulates, propagates itself, consuming body and soul, like those torches of which the Latin poet speaks, which ran from hand to hand through the circus.

V

In their bedroom, beside a fine portrait of Fanny by James Tissot, a relic of her pristine splendor, there was a Southern landscape, all in black and white, roughly represented in the sunlight by a country photographer.

A stony hillside with terraces of vines supported by stone-walls, and higher up, sheltered from the north wind by rows of cypresses and nestling against a small forest of pines and myrtles on which the sun shone brightly, was the great white house, half farm-house, half château, with a broad stoop, Italian roof, escutcheoned doors, and beyond, the red walls of the Provençal *mas,* the perches for the peacocks, the crib for the cattle, and the open sheds with ploughshares and harrows gleaming in their dark depths. The ruins of ancient fortifications, an enormous tower outlined against the cloudless sky, overlooked the whole, with a few roofs and the Roman church tower of Châteauneuf-des-Papes, where the Gaussins d'Armandy had dwelt for all time.

The domain of Castelet, vineyard and farm, rich in its vines, which were as famous as those of La Nerte and L'Ermitage, was transmitted from father to son, held in common by all the children, but always worked by the younger son, in accordance with the family tradition that required the eldest son to enter the consular service. Unluckily nature often interferes with such arrangements; and if ever there was a human being incapable of managing a farm, of managing anything under heaven, it was Césaire Gaussin, upon whom that heavy responsibility fell when he was twenty-four years of age.

A libertine, a haunter of village gambling-hells and brothels, Césaire, or rather *Le Fénat*—the good-for-naught, the bad boy,—to give him his [illegible]ful sobriquet, was an exaggerated specimen of the incongruous type which appears from time to time in the most austere families, like a sort of safety-valve.

And *after a few* years of neglect, of idiotic waste, of *disastrous games of bouillotte* at the clubs of Avignon an

Orange, the estate was mortgaged, the reserve cellars drained dry, the growing crops sold in advance; and one day, on the eve of the final levy, Le Fénat imitated his brother's signature, and drew three drafts payable at the consulate at Shanghai, feeling assured that he could procure the money to take them up before they matured; but they were presented to the elder brother in due course, with a desperate letter confessing the ruin of the family and the forgeries. The consul hastened to Châteauneuf, remedied the desperate condition of affairs by the aid of his savings and his wife's dowry, and, realizing Le Fénat's incapacity, he renounced the "career," although it was opening brilliantly before him, and became a simple vine-grower.

A true Gaussin he, in whom adherence to tradition was a mania, alternately violent and calm, like an extinct volcano with a remnant of eruptive power in reserve, threatening at times to break out; hard-working withal, and an exceedingly well-informed agriculturist. Thanks to him, Castelet prospered, extended its boundaries to include all the property as far as the Rhone, and, as human chances and mischances never come singly, little Jean made his appearance under the myrtles of the homestead. Meanwhile Le Fénat wandered about the house, crushed under the weight of his wrong-doing, hardly daring to look at his brother, whose contemptuous silence overwhelmed him; he breathed freely only in the fields, hunting or fishing, tiring out his disappointment by trifling tasks, picking snails from the vines, cutting superb canes of myrtle or reed, and breakfasting alone out-of-doors on a *brochette* of little birds, which he cooked over a fire of olive-branches in the middle of the pasture. Returning at night to dine at his brother's table, he did not speak a word, notwithstanding his sister-in-law's indulgent smile, for she pitied the poor creature and supplied him with pocket-money, unknown to her husband, who dealt sternly with Le Fénat, less on account of his past follies than on account of those still to come; and in truth, the great catastrophe was no sooner repaired than the elder Gaussin's pride was subjected to a new test.

Three times a week, a pretty fisher-girl came to Castelet to sew,—Divonne Abrieu, born in the osier-bed on the bank of the Rhone, a genuine river-plant, with a long, undulating stalk. In her Catalan cap of three pieces fitting tightly to her little head, the ribbons thrown back and disclosing the curve of the neck, slightly tanned like the face, down to the delicate snow-white lines of the breast and shoulders, she

made one think of some *donna* of the old courts of love held all around Châteauneuf, at Courthezon, at Vacquerias, in the old donjons whose ruins are crumbling away on the hillsides.

That historical suggestion had nothing to do with Césaire's love, for he was a simple soul, devoid of imagination, and unread; but, being short in stature, he liked tall women, and was caught the first day. He was an expert, was Le Fénat, in village intrigues; a contradance at the ball on Sunday, a present of game, and afterward the meeting in the fields. He found that Divonne did not dance, that she herself brought game to the kitchen, and that, being as strong and firm on her legs as one of the flexible white poplars on the river-bank, she was able to hurl the seducer headlong ten feet away. After that she kept him at a distance with the points of her scissors, which hung at her belt by a steel chain, and drove him mad with love, so that he talked of marrying her and confided in his sister-in-law. She, having known Divonne Abrieu from childhood, and knowing her to be virtuous and refined, thought in her inmost heart that that mésalliance would perhaps be Le Fénat's salvation; but the consul's pride rebelled at the idea of a Gaussin d'Armandy marrying a peasant: "If Césaire does that, I will never see him again." And he kept his word.

Césaire married, left Castelet, and went to live with his wife's relations on the bank of the Rhone, on a small allowance which his brother made him and which his indulgent sister-in-law carried to him every month. Little Jean accompanied his mother on her visits, taking the keenest delight in the cabin of the Abrieus, a round smoke-begrimed structure, shaken by the tramontane or the mistral, and supported by a single, vertical timber like a mast. The open doorway formed a frame for the little jetty where the nets lay drying, with the silvery, pearly scales gleaming and sparkling among the meshes; below lay two or three great fishing-boats, tossing and straining at their cables, and the broad joyous river, aglow with light, splashing against its islands in pale green masses. And Jean, when he was very young, acquired there his fondness for long journeys, and for the sea which he had never seen.

Uncle Césaire's exile lasted two or three years; it might never have ended except for a momentous event in the family, the birth of the two little twins, Marie and Marthe. The mother fell sick as a result of that double birth, ar

Césaire and his wife were granted permission to go and see her. The visit was followed by a reconciliation between the two brothers, illogical, instinctive, due to the irresistible power of community of blood; Césaire and his wife took up their abode at Castelet, and as the poor mother was completely disabled by incurable anæmia, soon complicated by rheumatic gout, it fell to Divonne to keep the house, to superintend the rearing of the little girls, to take charge of the numerous staff of servants, and to go twice a week to see Jean at his school at Avignon, to say nothing of the nursing of her invalid, who required her constant attention.

Being a woman of orderly instincts and clear-headed, she made up for her lack of education by her intelligence, her peasant's shrewdness, and the stray bits of learning that had remained in the brain of Le Fénat, now thoroughly tamed and disciplined. The consul relied upon her to overlook all the outlay for household expenses, which were very heavy with the increased burdens and, the constantly diminishing revenues, sapped at the foot of the vines by the phylloxera. All the outlying fields suffered, but the home farm was still free from the pest; and the consul was constantly preoccupied by his endeavors to save the home farm by investigation and experiment.

This Divonne Abrieu, who clung to her peasant cap and her artisan's steel chain, and performed so modestly her duties as housekeeper and companion, kept the family out of financial difficulty in those critical years; the invalid was always supplied with the same costly luxuries; the little girls were reared beside their mother, like young ladies, and Jean's allowance regularly paid, first at the boarding-school, then at Aix, where he studied law, and finally at Paris, whither he had gone to finish his course. By what miracles of orderly management, of vigilance, she succeeded in accomplishing so much, they were all as ignorant as she. But whenever Jean thought of Castelet, whenever he raised his eyes to the photograph with its pale tones faded by the light, the first face that it recalled, the first name that he uttered, was Divonne's, the great-hearted peasant woman who, he felt, was hidden behind the house of his fathers, holding it erect by the force of her will. For some days, however, since he had known what his mistress was, he had avoided pronouncing that revered name before her, as well as his mother's and those of all his family; it even annoyed him to look at the photograph, it was so out of place, so lost, on that wall above Sapho's bed!

One day, on returning home to dinner, he was surprised to find three covers laid instead of two, and even more surprised to find Fanny playing cards with a little man whom he did not recognize at first, but who, on turning toward him, displayed the light wild-goat's eyes, the enormous triumphant nose in a sunburned simpering face, the bald pate and the Leaguer's beard of Uncle Césaire. He answered his nephew's exclamations without putting down his cards:—

"I make myself at home, you see; I'm playing bézique with my niece."

His niece!

And Jean had taken such pains to conceal his liaison from everybody! That familiarity displeased him, and the remarks Césaire made in an undertone while Fanny was busy with the dinner. "I congratulate you, my boy—such eyes and arms! a morsel for a king!" It was much worse when Le Fénat began, at the table, to talk without the slightest reserve of the state of affairs at Castelet, of the errand that brought him to Paris.

The pretended object of his journey was to collect a sum of money, eight thousand francs, which he had loaned long ago to his friend Courbebaisse and never expected to see again; but a letter from a notary had informed him of Courbebaisse's death, *pechère!* and that his eight thousand francs were ready for him at any time. But the real cause, for the money might have been sent to him, "the real cause is your mother's health, my poor boy. She has failed very rapidly of late, and there are times when her head's all astray and she forgets everything, even the children's names. The other night, when your father left her room, she asked Divonne who that pleasant gentleman was who came to see her so often. No one but your aunt has noticed this as yet, and she only mentioned it to me to induce me to come to Paris and consult Bouchereau about the poor woman's condition, for he treated her once before."

"Has there ever been any insanity in the family?" inquired Fanny, with a grave and learned air, her La Gournerie air.

"Never," said Le Fénat; adding, with a sly smile that extended to his temples, that he had been a little cracked in his youth; "but my insanity was not displeasing to the ladies, and I didn't have to be shut up."

Jean gazed at them, heartbroken. The grief caused by the sad news was increased by an oppressive feeling of disgust at hearing that woman talk about his mother, her

firmities and her critical time of life, with the unvarnished language and the experienced air of a matron, while she sat with her elbows on the table, rolling a cigarette. And the other, talkative and indiscreet, threw aside all reserve and told all the family secrets.

Oh! the vines—the vines were in a wretched state! And even the home place itself would not last long; half of the young shoots were destroyed already, and they saved the rest only by a miracle, tending each bunch, each grape like sick children, with drugs which cost a lot. The alarming part of it was that the consul persisted in planting new slips, which the worms attacked at once, instead of letting olive-trees and caper-bushes grow at will on all that excellent land, now entirely useless, covered with leprous and withered vines.

Luckily he, Césaire, had a few hectares on the bank of the Rhone, which he treated by immersion, a magnificent discovery applicable only on low lands. Already he had been encouraged by an excellent crop, which produced a light wine, not very heady,—"frog's wine," the consul contemptuously called it—but Le Fénat was obstinafe too, and with Courbebaisse's eight thousand francs he proposed to buy Piboulette.

"You know, my boy, the little island in the Rhone, below the Abrieu's place; but this is between ourselves, no one at Castelet must have a suspicion of it."

"Not even Divonne, uncle?" querried Fanny, with a smile.

At his wife's name tears gathered in Le Fénat's eyes.

"Oh! Divonne—I never do anything without her. She has faith in my idea too, and would be so happy if her poor Césaire should repair the fortunes of Castelet after being the beginning of its ruin."

Jean shuddered; in God's name, did he propose to confess, to tell the lamentable story of the forgeries? But the Provençal, thinking only of his affection for Divonne, had begun to talk about her, of the happiness she gave him. And she was so lovely too, such a magnificent frame!

"Here, my niece, you're a woman, you ought to be a good judge."

He took from his wallet and handed her a photograph which never left him.

From Jean's filial tone when he spoke of his aunt, from the peasant woman's maternal advice written in a coarse, *slightly tremulous hand,* Fanny had imagined her to be *like one of the common* white-capped village women of

Seine-et-Oise, and was speechless with amazement at sight of that pretty face with its pure contour, brightened by the narrow white headgear, that graceful and flexible figure of a woman of thirty-five.

"Very lovely indeed," she said, pursing up her lips and with a strange inflection.

"And such a frame!" said the uncle, clinging to his image.

Then they went out on the balcony. After a day of such extreme heat that the zinc of the veranda still burned one's hand, a fine rain was falling from a stray cloud, cooling the air, pattering gayly on the roofs, drenching the sidewalks. Paris laughed merrily under that shower, and the noise of the crowd and the carriages, the uproar ascending from the streets intoxicated the provincial, rang in his empty, volatile head like a bell, recalling his youth and a stay of three months in Paris thirty years before, with his friend Courbebaisse.

"Such sport, my children, such high old times!" And he told how they went to the Prado one Mi-Carême, Courbebaisse as Chicard, and his mistress, La Mornas, as a ballad-monger,—a disguise which brought her good luck, as she had become a *café concert* celebrity. He himself, the uncle, moored his boat to a little hussy of the quarter whose name was Pellicule. And he laughed from his mouth to his temples, as merry as a cricket, hummed dance-tunes, and beat time with his arm about his niece's waist. At midnight, when he left them to return to Hôtel Cujas, the only hotel he knew in Paris, he sang at the top of his voice on the stairs, threw kisses to his niece, who held the light for him, and shouted to Jean,—

"I say, look out for yourself!"

As soon as he had gone, Fanny, upon whose forehead there remained a preoccupied fold, passed hastily into her dressing-room, and through the half-open door, while Jean was preparing for bed, she began in an almost indifferent tone: "I say your aunt's very pretty—I am not surprised now that you talked about her so often. You probably gave poor old Le Fénat plenty of cause for jealousy."

He protested with the utmost indignation. Divonne! a second mother to him, who used to take care of him and dress him when he was a little child! She saved him when *he was sick, from* death! No, no! he never had had the *slightest temptation* to commit such an infamous act.

"Nonsense! nonsense!" retorted the woman's strident voice, with hair-pins between her teeth; "you can't make me believe that with those eyes and the fine *frame* that imbecile talked about, his Divonne could ever have remained indifferent beside a dainty blond with a woman's skin, like you! We're all alike, you see, on the banks of the Rhone or anywhere else."

She said it with conviction, believing that her whole sex was quick to yield to every caprice and conquered by the first desire. He reiterated his denial, but he was disturbed in mind, searching his memory, asking himself if the breath of an innocent caress had ever warned him of any peril whatsoever; he could remember nothing, but the purity of his affection was sullied, the pure cameo marred with a scratch.

"There! look—this is the way they arrange the hair in your country."

Upon her lovely hair, massed in two long bands, she had pinned a handkerchief which made a very good imitation of the *catalane,* the cap in three pieces worn by the girls of Châteauneuf; and, standing very straight in front of him, in the milk-white folds of her night-dress, with flashing eyes, she asked him,—

"Do I look like Divonne?"

Oh! no, not at all; she resembled no one but herself, in that little cap which recalled the other, the Saint-Lazare cap, in which she looked so pretty, they said, when she threw her convict a farewell kiss in the courtroom: "Don't be discouraged, *m'ami;* the happy days will return."

And that reminiscence affected him so unpleasantly that, as soon as his mistress was in bed, he hurriedly extinguished the light, to avoid looking at her.

Early the next morning the uncle arrived in fine feather, twirling his cane, and calling out, "Oho! *bébés!*" in the gamesome, patronizing tone that Courbebaisse used to adopt when he came to look for him in Pellicule's arms. He seemed even more excited than on the previous day: the Hôtel Cujas, doubtless, and more than all else, the eight thousand francs stowed away in his wallet. The money to purchase Piboulette, to be sure; but he certainly had the right to abstract a few louis in order to offer his niece a breakfast in the country.

"How about Bouchereau?" queried his nephew who could not absent himself from his office two days in succession. It was agreed that they should breakfast on the Champs-

Élysées and that the two men should go afterwards to consult the doctor.

That was not what Le Fénat had dreamed of,—the arrival at Saint-Cloud in great state, with the carriage filled with champagne; but the breakfast was charming none the less, on the terrace of the restaurant under the shade of the acacias and Japanese varnish-trees, with occasional snatches of choruses from a day rehearsal at the neighboring café-concert. Césaire, very talkative, very gallant, aired all his fascinations to dazzle the Parisian. He "slanged" the waiters, complimented the chef on his *sauce meunière;* and Fanny laughed with a silly, forced heartiness, a private supper-room giggle, which annoyed Gaussin, as did the intimacy established between the uncle and the niece over his head.

You would have said that they were friends of twenty years' standing. Le Fénat, becoming sentimental with the wines served at dessert, talked about Castelet, Divonne, and also about his little Jean; he was happy to know that he was with her, a serious-minded woman who would prevent him from making a fool of himself. And he proceeded to advise her, as if she were a young bride, concerning the young man's somewhat morose disposition and the best way to treat him, tapping her arms, with thick tongue and glazed, watery eyes.

He sobered off at Bouchereau's. Two hours of waiting on the first floor on Place Vendôme, in those huge salons, high and cold, filled with a silent afflicted crowd; the hell of pain of which they traversed all the zones in succession, passing from room to room to the doctor's office.

Bouchereau, with his prodigious memory, remembered Madame Gaussin very well, having been called to see her in consultation at Castelet ten years before, at the beginning of her illness; he made them describe its different phases, looked over the former prescriptions, and lost no time in reassuring the two men concerning the symptoms of cerebral disturbance which had developed and which he attributed to the use of certain drugs. While he sat motionless at his desk, with his heavy lashes lowered over his sharp, searching little eyes, writing a long letter to his professional brother at Avignon, the uncle and nephew listened, holding their breath, to the scratching of that pen, which, so far as they were concerned, drowned all the noises of aristocratic Paris; and suddenly the power of the physician in modern times became manifest to them, the high-priest, the supreme faith, the unconquerable superstition.

Césaire left the house, grave and subdued.

"I am going back to the hotel to strap my trunk. The air of Paris doesn't agree with me, I'm afraid my boy; if I stayed on here I should make a fool of myself. I shall take the seven-o'clock train to-night. Make my excuses to my niece, won't you?"

Jean was careful to say nothing to detain him, dreading the results of his childishness, his frivolity; and the next morning he was congratulating himself on the knowledge that he was once more under Divonne's wing, when he suddenly appeared, with dejected features and his linen in sad disorder.

"Great God! uncle, was has happened to you?"

Collapsing into an arm-chair, voiceless and limp at first, but reviving by slow degrees, the uncle confessed to a meeting with a friend of the Courbebaisse time, a too copious dinner, and the loss of the eight thousand francs in a gambling-hell during the night. Nothing left, not a sou! How could he go home and tell Divonne that? And the purchase of Piboulette. Suddenly attacked with a sort of delirium, the Southerner put his hands over his eyes, stuffed his thumbs into his ears, howled, sobbed, cursed himself without stint, gave vent to his remorse in a general confession covering his whole life. He was the shame and the curse of his family; when individuals of his type appeared in families, their relatives would have the right to destroy them like wolves. Except for his brother's generosity, where would he be? At the galleys with thieves and forgers.

"Uncle, uncle!" cried Gaussin, distressed beyond measure, and trying to stop him.

But the other, wilfully blind and deaf, took delight in that public declaration of his crime, which he described in its most trival details, while Fanny gazed at him in pity blended with admiration. He was a passionate fellow, at all events, just such a scapegrace as she liked; and, deeply moved by his predicament, like the good-natured creature she was, she tried to devise some way of assisting him. But what could she do? She had seen nobody for a year, Jean had no connections. Suddenly a name came to her mind: Déchelette! He was undoubtedly in Paris at that moment, and he was such a kind-hearted fellow!

"But I hardly know him," said Jean.

"I will go to him myself."

"What! do you mean it?"

"Why not?"

Their glances met and understood each other. Déchelette also had been her lover, the lover of a night whom she hardly remembered. But he never forgot one; they were all arranged in order in his head, like the saints on a calendar.

"If it annoys you," she began, a little embarrassed. Thereupon Césaire, who, during that short discussion, had ceased his howling, bestowed upon them such a despairing, imploring glance that Jean submitted, consented between his teeth.

How interminable that hour seemed to both of them, distracted as they were by thoughts which they did not divulge to each other, as they leaned on the balcony rail, waiting for the woman's return.

"Does this Déchelette live very far away?"

"Why, no, on Rue de Rome—only a step," replied Jean fiercely, for he too thought that Fanny was very slow in returning. He tried to comfort himself with the engineer's motto in love: "No to-morrow," and the scornful tone in which he had heard him speak of Sapho as of an ex-star of the world of gallantry; but his lover's pride rebelled, and he could almost have wished that Déchelette would still consider her beautiful and desirable. Ah! why need that crack-brained old Césaire re-open all his wounds thus!

At last Fanny's cape turned the corner of the street. She returned with a beaming face.

"It's all right; I have the money."

When the eight thousand francs were spread out before him, the uncle wept with joy, insisted on giving a receipt, on fixing the rate of interest and the date of repayment.

"There's no need of it, uncle. I didn't mention your name. I am the one to whom the money was loaned, and you owe it to me for as long a time as you please."

"Such a service," replied Césaire, beside himself with gratitude, "is repaid with a friendship that never ends." And at the station, whither Gaussin accompanied him to make sure that he really took the train, he said with tears in his eyes: "What a woman! what a treasure! You must make her happy, I tell you."

Jean was much depressed by that episode, feeling that his chain, already so burdensome, was drawn tighter and tighter, and that two things had become blended which his innate delicacy had always kept separate and distinct: his family and his liaison. Now Césaire kept the mistress informed about all his labors, his plantations, gave her all

the news of Castelet; and Fanny criticized the consul's obstinacy in the matter of the vines, talked about his mother's health, irritated Jean with her solicitude or with misplaced advice. Never an allusion to the service she had rendered him. No, indeed, nor to Le Fénat's former experience, that blot on the fair fame of the house of Armandy, which the uncle had laid bare before her. Once only did she use it as a weapon of retort, under the following circumstances.

They were returning from the theater, and, as it was raining, they took a cab at a stand on the boulevard. The cab, one of those lumbering affairs which appear only after midnight, was a long while in starting, the man half asleep and the horse shaking his nose-bag. While they were waiting inside the vehicle out of the rain, an old driver, who was tying a new lash on his whip, calmly walked up to the door, his twine between his teeth, and said to Fanny in a cracked voice, reeking with liquor,—

"Good-evening. How goes it?"

"Hallo, is it you?"

She gave a little start, quickly repressed, and said to her lover in an undertone, "My father!"

Her father—that night-prowler in a long ex-livery cape, stained with mud and minus some of its metal buttons, and displaying in the light of the street lamp a bloated face, purple with alcohol, in which Gaussin fancied that he could recognize, in a vulgarized form, Fanny's regular, sensuous profile, her great lustful eyes! Without paying any heed to the man who accompanied his daughter, and as if he had not seen him, Père Legrand proceeded to give her news of the family. "The old woman's been at Necker for a fortnight; she's in a bad way. Go and see her some day; it will cheer her up. As for me, luckily the box-seat holds firm; still a good whip and a good lash. But business ain't very good. If you happen to want a good coachman by the month, that would just suit me. No? All right, then, and good-bye till I see you again."

They shook hands limply; the cab started.

"Well, would you believe it?" murmured Fanny; and she began at once to tell him at length about her family, a subject which she had always avoided, "it was so ghastly, so degrading!" but they knew each other better now; they had nothing to conceal from each other.

She was born at the Moulin-aux-Anglais, an inn in the suburbs, of that father, an ex-dragoon, who drove the stage

from Paris to Châtillon, and of an inn-servant, between twc trips to the bar.

She had never known her mother, who died in giving birth to her; but the proprietors of the house, like honest people, compelled the father to acknowledge his little one and to pay for her nursing. He dared not refuse, for he owed a large sum there; and when Fanny was four years old, he took her on the stage like a little dog, perched away up under the hood, highly delighted to bowl along the roads, to watch the lights of the lanterns running alongside, the smoking, panting flanks of the horses, and to fall asleep in the darkness and the wind, listening to the tinkling bells.

But Père Legrand soon tired of that essay in paternity; little as it cost, he had to feed and dress the brat. And then, too, she was an embarrassment to him in the matter of a marriage with a market-gardener's widow upon whose melon-beds and long lines of cabbages, by which his route lay, he had cast a longing eye. She had at that time a very well-defined conviction that her father intended to destroy her; that was the drunkard's absorbing idea, to rid himself of the child at any price; and if the widow herself, good Mère Machaume, had not taken her under the protection—

"By the way, you knew Machaume," said Fanny.

"What! that servant I saw at your old apartments?"

"She was my step-mother. She was so kind to me when I was little; I took her into my service to rescue her from her cur of a husband, who, after using up all her property, beat her and compelled her to wait on a trollop with whom he was living. Ah! poor Machaume, she knows what a handsome man costs. Well, when she left me, in spite of all I could say to her, she lost no time in taking up with him again, and now here she is at the hospital. How fast he goes backward without her, the old rascal! how dirty he was! what a ragpicker's look! there's nothing left of him but his whip—did you see how straight he held it? Even when he's too drunk to stand, he'll carry it in front of him like a taper and put it in his room; he never kept anything decent but that. 'Good whip, good lash,' that's his motto."

She talked about him unconsciously, as a stranger, without disgust or shame; and Jean was appalled to hear her. Such a father! such a mother!—compared with the consul's stern features and Madame Gaussin's angelic smile! And realizing suddenly the full significance of her lover's silence, his revolt against that social filth with which he was

plashed by living with her, Fanny observed in a philo
ophical tone: "After all, there seems to be something of th
ort in all families, and we're not responsible for it. I hav
ıy Père Legrand; you have your Uncle Césaire."

VI

"My dear Boy,—As I write you I am still all in a tremble from the terrible anxiety we have had; our twins disappeared, away from Castelet a whole day and night and the morning of the next day!

"It was Sunday at breakfast time that we noticed that the little ones were missing. I had dressed them nicely for the eight-o'clock mass to which the consul was to take them; then I thought no more about it, being busy with your mother, who was more nervous than usual, as if she had a presentiment of the misfortune that was hovering over us. You know, ever since she's been sick, she has been able to foresee what was going to happen; and the less able she is to move, the more busily her brain works.

"Luckily your mother was in her chamber, and the rest of us were all in the living-room waiting for the little ones; we shouted for them all over the home-place, the shepherd blew the great whistle he calls the sheep with; then Césaire in one direction, I in another, Rousseline, Tardive, everybody rushed all about Castelet, and whenever one of us met another, it was: 'Well?'—'Haven't found anything.' At last we didn't dare ask; with beating heart we went to the well below the long windows of the hay-loft. What a day! And I had to go up every minute or two to your mother, to smile calmly, and explain the absence of the little ones by saying that I had sent them to pass Sunday with their aunt at Villamuris. She seemed to believe it; but late in the night, while I was sitting up with her, and looking through the window at the lights moving about in the fields and on the Rhone, searching for the children, I heard her crying softly in her bed; and when I questioned her, 'I am crying on account of something which you are hiding from me, but which I have guessed all the same,' she replied, in the girlish voice which her suffering has brought back; and without saying anything more, we both worried our hearts out, keeping our grief to ourselves.

"At last, my dear child, not to make the painful story too long, on Monday morning our little ones were brought back to us by the workmen whom your uncle employs on the

island, who had found them on a pile of vine-branches, pa with cold and hunger after that night in the open air, an all surrounded by the water. And this is what they told u in the innocence of their little hearts. For a long time they had been beset by the idea of doing like their patron saints, Marthe and Marie, whose story they had read, of starting off in a boat without sails or oars or food of any sort, and spreading the Gospel on the first shore to which God's breath might carry them. And so, on Sunday after mass, they cast off a fishing-boat, and, kneeling in the bottom like the holy women, they floated quietly along with the current and ran aground among the reeds of Piboulette, notwithstanding the freshets, the high wind, the *révouluns*. Yes, the good Lord took care of them; and it was He who gave them back to us, the Pretties! with their Sunday ruffles a little rumpled, and the gilding on their prayer-books marred. We had not the heart to scold them, but only to hug and kiss them; but we are all still sick with the fright we had.

"The most affected of all was your mother, who, although we had told her nothing about it, felt death passing over Castelet, as she says; and she, ordinarily so placid and cheerful, still retains a sadness which nothing seems to cure, although your father and I and everybody are tenderly devoted to her. And suppose I should tell you, my dear Jean, that it is on your account more than any other that she is anxious and depressed? She dares not say so before your father, who wishes you to be left undisturbed at your work, but you didn't come after your examination as you promised. Give us a surprise for the Christmas holiday; help an invalid to recover her lovely smile. If you knew how bitterly we regret, when we no longer have our old people with us, that we did not give them more of our time!"

Standing by the window, where the light of a winter's sun filtered sluggishly in through the fog, Jean read that letter, relished to the full its flavor of the fields, the cherished memories of affection and sunlight.

"What's that?—let me see."

Fanny had just awakened in the yellow light that found its way between the parted curtains, and, heavy with sleep, mechanically put out her hand to the box of Maryland tobacco that always stood on her night table. He hesitated, knowing how the mere name of Divonne always inflamed his mistress's jealousy; but how could he refuse to show her the letter, when she recognized the paper and the handwriting?

At first the little girls' escapade appealed to her sympathies with charming effect, as she sat up in bed, both arms and breast bare, amid the waves of her brown hair, reading and rolling a cigarette; but the closing words irritated her to frenzy, and she crumpled up the letter and threw it across the room.

"I'll find a way to stop her mouth, about her holy women! It's all a scheme to make you leave Paris. She misses her handsome nephew, the—"

He tried to check her, to prevent her uttering the filthy word which she hurled at him, followed by a long string of the same sort. She had never given vent to her passion in such vulgar language before him, in such an overflowing torrent of foul anger, as from a sewer that had burst and discharged its slime and its stench. All the slang of her past as prostitute and street arab swelled her throat and distended her lip.

Easy enough to see what they all wanted down there. Césaire had tattled and there was a family scheme to break off their connection, to lure him back to the province with Divonne's fine frame as a bait.

"Let me tell you this, if you go I'll write to your cuckold. I'll give him warning—ah! upon my word!—"

As she spoke she gathered herself together on the bed with an expression of bitter hatred, with hollow cheeks and staring eyes, like a vicious beast preparing to spring.

And Gaussin remembered that he had seen her so on Rue de l'Arcade, but now it was against him that that bellowing hatred was directed, which tempted him to fall upon his mistress and beat her; for in such carnal passions, where respect and esteem for the loved one are null, brutality always comes to the surface in wrath or in caresses. He was afraid of himself, left the house abruptly for his office, and as he walked along inveighed bitterly against the life he had marked out for himself. That would teach him to put himself in the power of such a woman! What infamous, ghastly insults! His sisters, his mothers, no one was spared. What! had he not even the right to go and see his people? Why, in what sort of a prison had he voluntarily confined himself? And the whole course of their liaison passed through his mind; he saw how the Egyptian's lovely bare arms, twined about his neck on the night of the ball, had clung to him despotically and firmly, isolating him fro his friends and his family. Now his mind was made up. T very night, come what may, he would start for Castelet.

Some matters of business despatched, his leave of absence obtained at headquarters, he returned home early, expecting a terrible scene, prepared for anything, even a rupture. But the sweet greeting with which Fanny met him, her heavy eyes, her cheeks, softened as it were with tears, left him hardly the courage to assert his will.

"I am going to-night," he said, straightening himself up.

"You are quite right, *m'ami*. Go and see your mother, and above all—" she drew nearer to him coaxingly—"forget how naughty I was; I love you too much, it is my mania."

All the rest of the day, while she packed his trunk with coquettish solicitude, as sweet and attractive as in the early days, she maintained that penitent attitude, perhaps with the idea of detaining him. But not once did she say to him, "Stay;" and when, at the last moment, all hope having vanished in face of the final preparations, she nestled close to her lover, trying to impregnate him with her for the whole time of his journey and his absence, her farewell, her kiss murmured only this: "Tell me, Jean, you are not angry with me, are you?"

Oh! the intoxicating joy of awakening in the morning in the room that was his when he was a child, his heart still warm from the embraces of his dear ones, the outpouring of joy at his arrival, of finding in the same place, on the mosquito bar of his little bed, the same shaft of light that he had always looked for when he awoke, of hearing the cries of the peacocks on their perches, the creaking of the well-chain, the cattle rushing from the sheds with hurrying feet, and, when he had thrown his shutters back against the wall, of seeing once more that lovely warm light which entered the room in sheets, as if the floodgates had been opened, and that marvellous prospect of sloping vineyards, cypresses, olive trees and glistening pine woods, stretching away to the Rhone beneath a deep, cloudless sky, without a fleck of mist notwithstanding the early hour,—a green sky, swept all night by the mistral, which still filled the great valley with its strong cheery breath.

Jean compared that awakening to those in Paris beneath a sky as murky as his love, and felt happy and free. He went downstairs. The house, white with sunlight, was still asleep, all the shutters closed like the eyes of those within; and he was glad of a moment of solitude to recover himself, in that moral convalescence which he felt was just beginning for him.

He walked a few steps along the terrace, took an ascending path in the park—in what they called the park, a forest of pines and myrtles planted at random on the rough hill of Castelet, cut by irregular paths made slippery by dry pine needles. His dog, Miracle, very old and lame, had come out of his kennel, and followed silently at his heels; how often they had taken that walk together in the morning!

At the entrance to the vineyards, where the tall cypresses that formed the line of demarcation bent their graceful pointed tops, the dog hesitated; he knew how hard the thick layer of sand—a new remedy for the phylloxera with which the consul was experimenting—and the embankments supporting the terrace would be for his poor old paws. The joy of accompanying his master turned the scale at last, however; and at every obstacle there were painful struggles, a timid little whine, brief halts, and the awkward antics of a crab on a rock. Jean did not look at him, being entirely absorbed by the new alicant plants, of which his father had had much to say to him the night before. The shoots seemed to be flourishing in the smooth, glistening sand. At last the poor man was to be repaid for his persistent labors; the Castelet vintage would still live when La Nerte, L'Ermitage, all the famous native wines of the South were dead!

A little white cap suddenly appeared in front of him. It was Divonne, the first one astir in the house; she had a reaping-hook in her hand, and something else which she threw away; and her cheeks, ordinarily so colorless, were dyed with a sudden crimson flush. "Is it you, Jean? You frightened me; I thought it was your father." She recovered her self-possession in an instant, and kissed him. "Did you sleep well?"

"Very well, aunt; but why did you dread my father's coming?"

"Why?"

She picked up the root she had just torn from the ground.

"The consul told you, didn't he, that this time he was sure of success? Well, look! there's the creature."

Jean saw a tiny bit of yellowish moss buried in the wood, the imperceptible mould that has brought ruin step by step upon entire provinces; and it seemed an ironical freak of nature, on that glorious morning, in that vivifying sunlight—that infinitesimal object, destructive and indestructible.

"That's the beginning. In three months the whole farm will be destroyed, and your father will begin all over again,

for his pride is at stake. There will be more new plants and new remedies until the day when—"

A despairing gesture completed and emphasized her sentence.

"Really? is it as bad as that?"

"Oh! you know the consul. He never says a word, and gives me the money for the month as usual; but I see that he's preoccupied. He goes to Avignon and Orange. He is trying to raise the money."

"And Césaire? what about his immersions?" the young man asked in dismay.

Thank God, everything was going finely in that direction. They had had fifty casks of wine from the last crop; and this year the product would be twice that. In view of his success the consul had surrendered to his brother all the vineyards in the plain, which had hitherto been allowed to lie fallow, with long lines of dead stumps like a cemetery; and now they were under water for three months.

And the Provençal, proud of her man's work, of her Fénat, pointed out to Jean from their elevated position several great ponds—*clairs* she called them—kept full by embankments of lime as on the salt-marshes.

"Those plants will bear in two years; and so will Piboulette, and the island of Lamotte, which your uncle has bought without telling anybody. Then we shall be rich, but we must hold hard till then; every one must contribute and sacrifice himself."

She talked cheerfully of sacrifice, like a woman who has ceased to wonder at it, and with such contagious enthusiasm that Jean, impelled by a sudden thought, replied in the same tone: "We will sacrifice ourselves, Divonne."

That very day he wrote to Fanny that his parents could not continue his allowance, that he should be reduced to his salary at the department, and that, under those conditions, it was impossible for them to live together. The result was an earlier separation than he expected, three or four years before his anticipated departure from France; but he felt sure that his mistress would accept those weighty reasons, and that she would take pity upon him and his trouble, would assist him in that painful performance of a bounden duty.

Was it really a sacrifice? Was he not, on the contrary, relieved to put an end to an existence which seemed hateful and unhealthy to him, especially since he had returned to nature, to his family, to simple and upright affections? His

letter written, without great effort and without pain, he relied upon the virtuous and loyal affection of the honest hearts about him, upon the example of that father, proudest and most upright of men; upon the innocent smile of the little holy women, and also upon that boundless, peaceful horizon, the health-giving emanations from the mountains, the sky above him, the swift-flowing, eager river, to defend him against what he foresaw would be a fierce reply, full of threats and extravagant language; for, as he thought of his passion, of all the villainous elements of which it was composed, it seemed to him that he was just recovering from a wasting fever of the sort caused by the exhalations from swamp-lands.

Five or six days passed in the silence that follows a decisive blow. Morning and night Jean went to the post and returned empty-handed, strangely perturbed in mind. What was she doing? What had she decided upon, and, in any event, why not reply? He thought of nothing else. And at night, when everybody at Castelet was sleeping soundly, and the wind crooning through the long corridors, he and Césaire discussed it in his little room.

"She's likely to turn up here!" the uncle declared; and his anxiety was greatly increased by the fact that the letter of rupture contained two notes, on six months and a year's time, to adjust his debt and the interest thereon. How could he pay those notes? How could he explain to Divonne? He shuddered at the bare thought, and made his nephew unhappy when he remarked with a long face, as he shook the ashes from his pipe at the conclusion of their midnight interview, "Well, good-night; at all events, what you have done is quite right."

At last this reply arrived, and after reading the first lines—"My dear man, I have not written to you sooner, because I was determined to prove to you otherwise than by words how well I understand you and love you,"—Jean stopped, as surprised as a man who hears a symphony instead of the signal for capitulation that he dreaded. He turned hastily to the last page, where he read—"remain until death your dog who loves you, whom you can beat if you choose, and who sends you a passionately loving kiss."

So she had not received his letter! But when he read it through, line by line, with tears in his eyes, it proved to be really a reply, and said that Fanny had long anticipated the bad news of the trouble at Castelet, which would hasten the inevitable separation. She had at once set about finding

some employment in order that she might no longer remain a burden to him, and she had found a position as manager of a lodging-house on Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, in the service of a very wealthy lady. A hundred francs a month with board and lodging, and her Sundays free.

"You understand, my man, one day a week to love each other; for you will still love me, won't you? You will repay me for the great effort I am making, working for the first time in my life, for the night and day slavery which I accept, with humiliations which you cannot imagine and which will be a sore trial to my craze for independence. But I feel a most extraordinary satisfaction in suffering for love of you. I owe you so much, you have taught me so many good, honorable things that no one had ever mentioned to me! Ah! if we had only met sooner! But before you had learned to walk, I was lying in men's arms. But not one of them all can boast of having led me to make such a resolution in order to keep him a little longer. Now, return when you choose, the apartment is empty. I have looked over all my things; that was the hardest of all, to clean out the drawers and throw away the souvenirs. You will find only my portrait left, and that will cost you nothing; nothing but the kind glances which I beg in its favor. Ah! *m'ami, m'ami!* However, if you keep my Sunday for me, and my little place in your neck, my place, you know—" And there followed loving phrases, cajoleries, the voluptuous wantonness of a cat, coupled with passionate words which made the lover rub his face against the glossy paper, as if the warm human caress were transmitted by it.

"Doesn't she mention my notes?" asked Uncle Césaire, timidly.

"She sends them back to you. You can repay her when you are rich."

The uncle breathed a sigh of relief, his temples wrinkled with satisfaction, and with portentous gravity, with his strong Southern accent, he said,—

"Ah! do you want me to tell you something? That woman's a saint!"

Then, passing to another line of thought, with the instability, the lack of logic and of memory which was one of the absurdities of his character: "And such passion, my boy, such fire! Why, my mouth is all parched as it used to be when Courbebaisse read me his letters from La Mornas."

Once more Jean had to submit to the story of the first

journey to Paris, the Hôtel Cujas and Pellicule; but he did not hear, as he leaned on the sill of the open window, in the peaceful night bathed by a full moon, so bright that the roosters were deceived and hailed it as the break of day.

So this redemption by love of which poets sing is a reality! and he was conscious of a sort of pride in the thought that all those great, those illustrious men whom Fanny had loved before his time, far from regenerating her, had made her more depraved, whereas he, solely by the power of his upright nature, might perhaps redeem her from vice forever.

He was grateful to her for having devised that middle course, that semi-rupture in which she would acquire the new habit of labor so hard for her indolent nature; and he wrote her the next day in a fatherly tone, the tone of an elderly gentleman, to encourage her in her scheme of reformation and to express his uneasiness concerning the quality of the house she was managing and the class of people who resorted to it; for he distrusted her indulgence and her readiness to say, as she submitted to his will: "What do you want? Is this right?"

By return mail Fanny, with the docility of a little girl, drew a picture of her lodging-house, a regular family hotel occupied by foreigners. On the first floor were some Peruvians, father and mother, children and numerous servants; on the second a Russian family and a wealthy Dutchman, a coral merchant. The chambers on the third were let to two riders from the Hippodrome, Englishmen of good form, very *comme il faut,* and the most interesting little family, Mademoiselle Minna Vogel, a zither-player from Stuttgart, with her brother Leo, a poor consumptive, who had been obliged to break off his studies at the Paris Conservatoire, and whom his tall sister had come to Paris to take care of, with no other means of paying for their board and lodging than the proceeds of a few concerts.

"The most touching and most honorable company imaginable, as you see, my dear man. I myself am supposed to be a widow, and I am treated with the utmost consideration. Indeed I would not suffer it to be otherwise; your wife must be respected. Pray understand me when I say 'your wife.' I know that you will go away some day, that I shall lose you, but there will never be another after you; I shall remain yours forever, retaining the taste of your caresses and the good instincts you have aroused in me. It's very absurd, isn't it?—Sapho virtuous! Yes, virtuous, when you

are no longer here; but for you I shall remain as you have loved me, passionate and ardent. I adore you!"

Jean was suddenly attacked with a feeling of intense depression and ennui. These returns of the prodigal son, after the first joys of the arrival, the orgies of effusive affection and fatted calf, are always poisoned by memories of the associations of the wandering life, regret for the bitter husks and for the indolent flocks. It is a sort of disenchantment with persons and things, which seem suddenly devoid of attraction and colorless. The Provençal winter mornings lost their bracing, health-giving quality for him, the hunting of the beautiful reddish-brown otter lost its attraction, and the wild-duck shooting in old Abrieu's *nayechien*. The wind seemed bitter to Jean, the water rough, and very tedious were the excursions among the inundated vineyards with his uncle explaining his system of dams, floodgates, and trenches.

The village, which he viewed for the first few days through the memories of his former experiences as a small boy,—a village of old shanties, some abandoned,—smelt of death and desolation like an Italian village; and when he went to the post, on the tottering stone step of every door he must submit to the tiresome repetitions of all the old men, twisted like trees exposed to the wind, with their arms thrust through stocking legs, and of the old women with chins like yellow boxwood under their tight-fitting caps, with little eyes, gleaming and sparkling like lizards' eyes in the crevices of old walls.

Always the same lamentations over the death of the vines, the end of the madder, the disease of the mulberry-trees, the seven plagues of Egypt ruining that fair land of Provence; and to avoid them, he sometimes returned by way of the steep lanes that skirt the old walls of the château of the Popes, deserted lanes obstructed by underbrush, by the tall Saint-Roch grass, useful as a cure for ring-worm, extremely well placed in that nook out of the Middle Ages, in the shadow of the immense ruin towering over the road.

Then he would meet the curé Malassagne, on his way from saying mass, coming down the hill with long, excited strides, his band awry, his cassock held up with both hands because of the thorns and the weeds. The priest would stop and inveigh against the impiety of the peasants, the infamous conduct of the municipal council; he would hurl his malediction at the fields, cattle and men, backsliders who no longer came to service, who buried their dead without the

sacraments and treated their own ailments with magnetism or spiritualism, to save the expense of a priest and a doctor.

"Yes, monsieur, spiritualism! that's what the peasants of the Comtat are coming to! And you expect that your vines won't be diseased!"

Jean, who perhaps had a letter from Fanny open and burning in his pocket, would listen with an absent expression, escape from the priest's sermon as quickly as possible, return to Castelet, and ensconce himself in a cleft in the cliff,—what the Provençaux call a *cagnard*,—sheltered from the wind that blows all about and concentrating the warmth of the sun's rays reflected from the rock.

He would select the most secluded and the wildest, overgrown by bramble-bushes and kermes oaks, and would lie on the ground to read his letter; and gradually the subtle odor it exhaled, the caressing words, the images evoked would produce a sensuous drunkenness which quickened his pulse and created an hallucination so powerful as to cause the whole landscape to vanish like useless stage-properties,—the river, the clustered islets, the villages in the hollows of the little alps, the whole sweep of the vast valley where the fierce gust of wind pursued the sunbeams and drove them in waves before it. He was in their bedroom, opposite the gray-roofed station, a prey to the caresses, the fierce passions which caused them to cling to each other with the convulsive grasp of a drowning man.

Suddenly he would hear steps in the path, and limpid laughter: "There he is!" His sisters would appear, their little legs bare amid the heather, escorted by old Miracle as proud as Lucifer to have followed his master's trail, and wagging his tail triumphantly; but Jean would send him away with a kick, and decline the offers to play at hide-and-seek or tag, which they timidly put forward. And yet he loved them, his little twin-sisters who doted on their big brother always so far away; he had become a child for their benefit as soon as he arrived, and he was amused by the contrast between the pretty creatures, born at the same time and so dissimilar. One was tall and dark, with curly hair, of a mystic turn and headstrong; it was she who had conceived the idea of the boat, excited by what Malassagne the curé had read to her; and that little Marie the Egyptian had drawn into her scheme the fair-haired Marthe, who was a gentle, yielding creature, resembling her mother and brother.

But what a hateful annoyance it was, while he was living amid his memories, to have those innocent caresses minglin

with the dainty perfume that his mistress's letter left upon him. "No, leave me; I must work." And he would return to the house, intending to shut himself up in his room, when his father would call to him as he passed,—

"Is it you, Jean—just listen to this."

The mail hour brought new cause for depression to that man, naturally of a gloomy turn of mind, and retaining from his life in the East a habit of solemn silence, broken abruptly by reminiscences,—"when I was consul at Hong-Kong,"—which blazed out like the sparks from old stumps on the fire. While he listened to his father reading and discussing the morning papers, Jean would gaze at Caoudal's *Sapho* on the mantel, her arms around her knees, her lyre by her side,—the WHOLE LYRE,—a bronze copy purchased twenty years before at the time of the improvements at Castelet; and that bronze, which made him sick at heart in the shop-windows in Paris, aroused an amorous emotion in him, made him long to kiss those shoulders, to unclasp those cold, polished hands, to hear her say to him, "Sapho to you, but to none but you!"

The tempting figure rose before him when he went out, walked with him, doubled the sound of his footsteps on the broad, pretentious staircase. The pendulum of the old clock beat time to the name of Sapho, the wind whispered it through the long, cold, flagged corridors of that summer dwelling; he found it in all the books of that country library, old volumes with red edges, where the crumbs of his luncheons as a child still lingered in the stitching. And that persistent souvenir of his mistress pursued him even to his mother's bedroom, where Divonne was arranging the invalid's lovely white hair, combing it back from her face, which had retained its placidity and its bright color notwithstanding her constant and varied suffering.

"Ah! here's our Jean," the mother would say. But his aunt, with her bare neck, her little cap, her sleeves turned back for the purposes of that invalid's toilet of which she alone had charge, reminded him of other awakenings, recalled his mistress again, leaping out of bed amid the smoke of her first cigarette. He hated himself for such thoughts, especially in that chamber! But what could he do to avoid them?

"Our child is no longer the same, sister," Madame Gaussin would say sadly. "What's the matter with him?" And they would try together to divine the reason. Divonne cudgelled her ingenuous brain, she would have liked to question

the young man; but he seemed to shun her now, to avoid being alone with her.

One morning, having watched him, she surprised him in his *cagnard,* trembling in the fever of his letters and his bad dreams. He rose, with a gloomy expression. She detained him, made him sit down beside her on the warm stone. "Don't you love me any more? Am I no longer your Divonne to whom you used to tell all your troubles?"

"Why yes, why yes," he stammered, disturbed by her affectionate manner, and averting his eyes so that she might not see in them any suggestion of what he had just been reading,—love-calls, desperate shrieks, the delirious utterances of passion at a distance. "What is the matter with you? Why are you so depressed?" murmured Divonne, coaxing him with voice and hands, as one deals with children. He was her child in a certain sense; in her eyes he was still ten years old, the age at which little men are emancipated.

He, already inflamed by his letter, quivered under the disturbing fascination of that lovely body so near his own, of those lips warm with the blood quickened by the fresh breeze that disarranged her hair and sent it flying about over her forehead in dainty curls after the Parisian fashion. And Sapho's lessons—"All women are the same; in the presence of a man they have but one idea in their heads"—made the peasant woman's happy smile and the gesture with which she detained him to listen to her affectionate questions an incitement of his passions.

Suddenly he felt the blinding rush of an evil temptation to his brain; and the effort he made to resist it shook him with a convulsive shudder. Divonne was dismayed to see him so pale, with his teeth chattering. "Why, the poor boy—he has the fever!" With an affectionate unreflecting movement, she untied the broad handkerchief that she wore over her shoulders to put it around his neck; but she was suddenly seized, enveloped, and felt the burning pressure of a frantic kiss on her neck and shoulders, on all the gleaming flesh suddenly laid bare to the sunlight. She had no time to cry out nor to defend herself, perhaps not even a clear perception of what had taken place. "Ah! I am mad—I am mad!" He rushed away and was already far off on the moor, where the stones rolled viciously beneath his feet.

At *breakfast that* day Jean announced that he must go *away that same* evening, being summoned to Paris by an *order from the* Minister.

"Go away already! Why, you said— You have only just come!"

There were outcries and entreaties. But he could not remain with them, since Sapho's agitating, corrupting influence persistently intervened between him and all those loving hearts. Moreover, had he not made the greatest of all sacrifices to them by abandoning his life *à deux?* The definitive rupture would be consummated a little later; and then he would return to embrace them all and give his heart to them without shame or embarrassment.

It was late at night, the family had retired, and the house was dark when Césaire returned after accompanying his nephew to the train at Avignon. After he had fed the horse and glanced at the sky—the glance of men who live by the products of the soil, to see what the weather promises to be—he was about to enter the house, when he saw a white form on a bench on the terrace.

"Is that you, Divonne?"

"Yes, I was waiting for you."

Being very busy all day, necessarily separated from her Fénat, whom she adored, she had the evening for talking with him and for a little walk together. Was it because of the brief scene between herself and Jean, which, upon thinking it over, she understood even better than she would have liked, or was it because of the emotion aroused by watching the poor mother weep silently all day? Whatever the cause her voice trembled and her mind was disturbed to an extraordinary degree in a person usually so calm and devoted to her duty. "Do you know why he left us so suddenly?" She did not believe in that story about the Minister, suspecting rather some unworthy attachment which was drawing him away from his family. There were so many perils, such fatal associations in that depraved Paris!

Césaire, who could not conceal anything from her, admitted that there was a woman in Jean's life, but an excellent creature, incapable of alienating him from his own people; and he talked about her devotion, the affecting letters she wrote, lauded especially her heroic resolution to work, which seemed perfectly natural to the peasant woman. "For after all one must work to live."

"Not that sort of women," said Césaire.

"Then you mean that Jean is living with a good-for-nothing? And you have been to their house?"

"I swear to you, Divonne, that there isn't a purer or more

virtuous woman on earth than she's been since she knew him. Love has rehabilitated her."

But his words were too long; Divonne did not understand them. To her mind that woman belonged in the riff-raff which she called "bad women," and the thought that her Jean was the victim of such a creature angered her. Suppose the consul should get an inkling of it!

Césaire tried to calm her, assured her, by all the wrinkles in his somewhat dissipated, good-humored face, that at the boy's age one could not do without women.

"*Pardi!* then let him marry," she said with affecting earnestness.

"At all events, they're no longer together; it is all right—"

"Listen, Césaire," she rejoined in a serious tone, "you know our old saying: 'The misfortune always lasts longer than the man who causes it.' If what you say is true, if Jean has drawn that woman out of the mud, perhaps he has soiled himself in that unpleasant task. Possibly he may have made her better and more virtuous, but who knows if the evil that was in her hasn't spoiled our child to the very core?"

They were walking back toward the terrace. Night, peaceful and clear, reigned over the whole silent valley, where nothing was alive save the glistening moonlight, the rolling river, the ponds lying like pools of silver. Everywhere profound tranquillity, a sense of remoteness, the untroubled repose of dreamless sleep. Suddenly the up train rumbled heavily along the bank of the Rhone at full speed.

"Oh! that Paris!" exclaimed Divonne, shaking her fist at the foe upon whom the provinces vent all their wrath, "that Paris!—to think of what we give it and what it sends back to us!"

VII

It was cold and foggy one dark afternoon at four o'cloc even on the broad Avenue des Champs-Élysées, where tl carriages drove hurriedly by with a dull, muffled roar. Jea was hardly able to read, at the end of a small garden, th gate of which stood open, these words in gilt letters, hig in the air, over the entresol of a house of very comfortabl and placid cottage-like aspect: *Furnished Apartments Family Hotel.* A coupê was waiting at the curbstone.

Opening the door, Jean at once saw her whom he sought, sitting in the light from the window, and turning the leaves of a huge account book, opposite another woman, tall and fashionably dressed, with a handkerchief and a small shopping-bag in her hands.

"What do you wish, monsieur?" Fanny recognized him, sprang to her feet in amazement, and said in an undertone as she passed her companion, "It's the little one." The other eyed Gaussin from head to foot with the charming expert *sang-froid* which experience imparts, and said, quite loud, without the slightest ceremony: "Embrace, children—I am not looking." Then she took Fanny's place and began to verify her figures.

They held each other's hands and were whispering meaningless phrases "How are you?"—"Very well, thanks."—"You must have left last night?" But the trembling of their voices gave the words their true meaning. As they sat together on the sofa, Fanny, recovering her self-possession to some extent, asked him under her breath: "Don't you recognize my employer? You have seen her before, at Déchelette's ball, as a Spanish bride. The bride's freshness has worn off a little, eh?"

"Then it's—?"

"Rosario Sanches, de Potter's mistress."

This Rosaria—Rosa was her pet name, written on the mirrors of all the night restaurants and always with some obscenity underneath—was a former "chariot lady" at the Hippodrome, famous in the world of pleasure for her cynical dissoluteness and for the blows of her tongue and her

whip and much sought after by club men, whom she drove as she did her horses.

A Spaniard from Oran, she had been beautiful rather than pretty, and still produced by artificial light considerable effect with her black eyes touched with bistre, and her eyebrows connected as by a hyphen; but even in that dim light her fifty years were plainly marked upon a lifeless, harsh face, with a rough yellow skin like a lemon of her native country. She had been an intimate friend of Fanny Legrand for years, had been her chaperone in gallantry, and the mere mention of her name alarmed the lover.

Fanny, who understood the trembling of his arm, tried to excuse herself. To whom was she to apply to find employment? She was very much perplexed. Besides, Rosa was leading a respectable life now; she was rich, very rich, and lived at her mansion on Avenue de Villiers or at her villa at Enghien, receiving a few old friends, but only one lover, the same old one, her musician.

"De Potter?" said Paul; "I thought he was married."

"So he is, married and has children; it seems indeed that his wife is pretty, but that didn't prevent his coming back to the old flame; and if you could see how she talks to him, how she treats him. Ah! he's badly bitten, I tell you." She pressed his hand in loving reproof. At that moment the lady looked up from her book and addressed her bag, which was jumping about at the end of its ribbon,—

"Just keep quiet, will you!" Then to the housekeeper in a tone of command: "Give me a piece of sugar quickly for Bichito."

Fanny rose, brought the sugar and held it to the opening of the reticule, with an abundance of flattering, childish talk. "Just look at the pretty creature!" she said to her lover, pointing to a sort of fat lizard surrounded with cotton-wool, a deformed, scaly beast, crested and dentelated, with a hooded head above a mass of shivering, gelatinous flesh; a chameleon sent from Algeria to Rosa, who protected it from the Parisian winter by care and warmth. She loved it as she had never loved any man; and Jean readily divined from Fanny's sycophantic endearments the place that the horrid beast occupied in the house.

The lady closed the book and prepared to take her leave. "Not very bad for the second fortnight. But be careful about the *candles*."

She cast a proprietress's glance around the little salon *which was very* neat and orderly with its plush-cover

furniture, blew a little dust from the plant on the table, and pointed out a rent in the window-curtain; after which she said to the young people with a cunning leer: "No nonsense, you know my children; the house is perfectly respectable;" and entering the carriage which was waiting at the door, she went to take her drive in the Bois.

"Do you suppose that isn't exasperating?" said Fanny. "I have them on my back, either her or her mother, twice a week. The mother's even worse, more horrible looking. I must love you pretty well, you see, to stay on in this barrack.—Well, you're here at last, I have you once more! I was so afraid." And she held him in her arms a long while, standing, lips against lips, assuring herself by the quivering of the kiss that he was still all hers. But people were going and coming in the hall; they had to be on their guard. When they had brought the lamp, she seated herself in her usual place, a piece of needlework in her hands; he sat quite near her, as if making a call.

"Am I not changed, eh? This is not much like me, is it?"

She pointed with a smile to her needle, which she handled with the awkwardness of a little girl. She had always detested needlework; a book, her piano, her cigarette, or, with her sleeves rolled up, cooking some dainty little dish—she had never done any other work than that. But what could she do here? She could not think of touching the piano in the salon, as she was obliged to stay in the office all day. Novels? She knew many more interesting stories than they had to tell. In default of the prohibited cigarette, she had taken up that piece of lace, which kept her fingers busy and left her free to think, and she understood now the taste of women for such trivial employments, which she formerly despised.

And while she dropped and picked up her stitches laughingly, with the attention of inexperience, Jean watched her, fresh and blooming in her simple dress, her straight, slender neck, her hair combed smooth on her graceful classic head, and such a sedate, virtuous air! Without, a constant stream of fashionable courtesans, amid luxurious surroundings, perched high in air on their phaetons, rolled down the avenue toward the noisy Paris of the boulevards; and Fanny seemed to feel no regret for that ostentatious, triumphant voice in which she might have taken her part, and which she had disdained for him. Provided that he agreed to see her from time to time, she gladly accepted her life of slavery, and even discovered an amusing side to it.

All the boarders adored her. The women, foreigners devoid of taste, consulted her before purchasing their dresses; she gave singing lessons in the morning to the oldest of the little Peruvians, and she gave advice, concerning books to read and plays to see, to the gentlemen who treated her with the utmost consideration and attention,—one in particular, the Dutchman on the second floor. "He sits right where you are and gazes at me in rapt contemplation until I say to him, 'Kuyper, you annoy me.' Then he replies, 'Pien,' and goes away. It was he who gave me this little coral brooch. It's worth about a hundred *sous*, you see; I took it to avoid discussion."

A waiter entered, carrying a salver which he placed on the edge of the table, pushing back the plant a little way. "I eat here all by myself, an hour before the *table d'hôte*." She selected two dishes from the long and varied menu. The manager was entitled to only two dishes and the soup. "She must be a stingy creature, that Rosario! However, I prefer to eat here; I don't have to talk, and I read over your letters, which are good company for me."

She interrupted herself again to procure a tablecloth and napkins; at every moment somebody called upon her: there were orders to give, a closet to be opened, a requisition to fill. Jean realized that he would be in her way if he remained longer; then, too, they were bringing in her dinner, and it was so pitiful, that little souptureen with one portion smoking on the table, causing the same thought to pass through both their minds, the same regret for their former *tête-à-têtes!*

"Until Sunday, until Sunday," she murmured low, as she sent him away. And as they could not embrace because of the servants, and boarders going up and down the stairs, she took his hand and held it long against her heart, as if to force the caress in.

All the evening, all night he thought of her, suffering in her humiliating slavery to that trollop and her fat lizard; then the Dutchman disturbed him also, and until Sunday he hardly lived. In reality that semi-rupture which was to pave the way without a shock for the end of their liaison, was to her the blow of the pruning-hook which gives renewed life to the exhausted tree. They wrote each other almost every day, such loving notes as are produced by the impatience of lovers; or else there was a pleasant chat in *her office, after* leaving the department, during her hour *for needlework.*

She had spoken of him in the house "as a relati mine," and under cover of that vague description he come occasionally and pass the evening in the salc thousand leagues from Paris. He knew the Peruvian ily with its innumerable young ladies, decked out in zling colors, arranged around the salon for all the world macaws on their perches; he listened to the zither Mademoiselle Minna Vogel, begirt with flowers like a l pole, and saw her sickly, voiceless brother passiona following the rhythm of the music with his head and r ning his fingers over an imaginary clarinet, the only k he was allowed to play. He played whist with Fann Dutchman, a stout, bald-headed dolt, of miserly aspect, w had sailed over all the seas on the globe, and, when he w asked for some facts concerning Australia, where he ha passed a number of months, replied, rolling his eyes, "Gue: how much potatoes are in Melbourne?" for he had bee impressed by that single fact and no other, the high pric of potatoes in every country he visited.

Fanny was the soul of these occasions; she talked, sang played the well-informed and worldly Parisian; and such traces as her manners retained of Bohemia or of the studio either escaped the notice of those exotic creatures or seemed to them the acme of good form. She dazzled them with her intimate acquaintance with the famous names in art and literature, gave the Russian lady, who doted on Dejoie's works, interesting facts concerning the novelist's manner of writing, the number of cups of coffee he absorbed in one night, the exact figures of the ridiculous amount the publishers of *Cenderinette* had paid him for the book that made their fortunes. And his mistress's success made Gaussin so proud that he forgot to be jealous and would willingly have attested the truth of her words if anybody had cast a doubt upon them.

While he gazed admiringly at her in that peaceful salon lighted by shaded lamps, as she served the tea, played accompaniments for the young ladies or gave them advice like an older sister, there was a strange fascination for him in fancying her to himself in very different guise, when she would arrive at his house the following Sunday morning drenched and shivering, and without even going near the fire, which was blazing in her honor, would hurriedly undress and creep into the great bed beside him. Then wha embraces, what caresses, wherein the self-restraint of the whole week would have its revenge, the being deprived c

each other which kept alive the passion of their love.

The hours would pass, would run together confusedly; they would not stir from the bed until night. There was nothing to tempt them elsewhere; no entertainment, no one to see, not even the Hettémas, who had decided to live in the country for economy's sake. Their little lunch prepared beside the bed, they would listen, unheeding, to the uproar of the Parisian Sunday splashing through the street, the whistling of the locomotives, the rumbling of loaded cabs; and the rain falling in great drops on the zinc of the balcony, with the precipitate beating of their hearts, marked time for that absence of life, oblivious of the passing hours, until twilight.

Then the gas, lighted across the street, would cast a pale gleam on the hangings; they must rise and dress, as Fanny must be at home at seven. In the half-light of the bedroom, all her weariness, all her heart-sickness returned, heavier and more cruel than ever, as she put on her boots, still damp from her long walk, her skirts, her manager's dress, the black uniform of poor women.

And her chagrin was intensified by the things about her that she loved, the furniture, the little dressing-room of the happy days. She would tear herself away at last: "Let us go!" and, that they might remain together longer, Jean would accompany her; arm-in-arm they would walk slowly up Avenue de Champs-Élysées, where the double row of lamps, with the Arc de Triomphe rising out of the darkness in the distance, and two or three stars twinkling in a narrow bit of sky, counterfeited the background of a diorama. At the corner of Rue Pergolèse, very near the lodging-house, she would raise her veil for a last kiss, and would leave him there bewildered, disgusted with his apartments, to which he returned at late as possible, cursing poverty, and almost angry with the people at Castelet on account of the sacrifice he was making for them.

They dragged through two or three months of that existence, which at last became absolutely intolerable, as Jean had been obliged to make his visits less frequent because of the gossiping of servants, and Fanny was more and more exasperating by the avarice of the Sanchès family, mother and daughter. She thought in silence of setting up their little household anew, and felt that her lover too was nearing the end of his endurance, but she preferred that he should speak first.

One Sunday in April Fanny made her appearance dressed more elaborately than usual, in a round hat and a spring dress, very simple—they were not rich—but fitted perfectly to her graceful figure.

"Get up quickly; we are going to lunch in the country."

"In the country?"

"Yes, at Enghien, at Rosa's. She invites us both."

He said no at first, but she insisted. Rosa would never forgive a refusal. "You can afford to do it for my sake. It seems to me that I do enough."

It was on the shore of the lake at Enghien, with a broad lawn in front extending to a little inlet where several yawls and gondolas rocked at their moorings; a large chalet, beautifully decorated and furnished; the ceilings and glass panels reflecting the sparkling water and the magnificent tall hedges of a park already quivering with early verdure and lilacs in flower. The correct liveries, the paths where not even a wisp of straw could be seen, did honor to the twofold superintendence of Rosario and old lady Pilar.

The house party were at table when they arrived, a false direction having caused them to go astray around the lake, through lanes between high garden walls. Jean's discomposure reached its climax at the cold reception accorded them by the mistress of the house, who was in a rage because they had kept her waiting, and at the extraordinary aspect of the old hags to whom Rosa presented him in her van-driver's voice. Three "élégantes," as the illustrious cocottes style one another, three antique strumpets, numbered among the glories of the Second Empire, with names as famous as that of a great poet or victorious general,—Wilkie Cob, Sombreuse, Clara Desfous.

"Elegant" they all were beyond question, tricked out in the latest style, charmingly dressed from collarette to boots; but so withered, painted, powdered! Sombreuse, with no eyelashes, lifeless eyes, nerveless lip, feeling around for her plate, her fork, her glass; La Desfous, enormously stout and bloated, with a hot-water bottle at her feet, displaying on the table-cloth her poor gouty, distorted fingers covered with gleaming rings as hard to put on and take off as the rings of a Roman puzzle. And Cob, very slender, with a youthful figure which added to the ghastliness of her fleshless face, like a sick clown's, beneath a mane of yellow tow. She, being utterly ruined, her property taken on execution, had gone to Monte-Carlo to try one last *coup* and *had returned without* a *sou,* mad with love for a handsome

croupier who would have none of her; Rosa, having taken her in, supported her and gloried in it.

All these women knew Fanny and welcomed her with a patronizing "How goes it, little one?" It is a fact that with her dress at three francs the yard and no ornaments save Kuyper's red brooch, she seemed like a raw recruit among those ghastly decorated veterans in harlotry, whom their luxurious surroundings, the light reflected from the lake and the sky, pouring in through the folding-doors of the drawing-room, mingled with the perfumes of spring, made more spectral than ever.

There was old Mère Pilar too, the "*chinge,*" as she called herself in her Franco-Spanish jargon, a genuine monkey with a dead rasping skin, her grinning features instinct with savage malice, her gray hair cut short around her ears like a boy's, and a broad blue sailor's collar over her old black satin.

"And Monsieur Bichito," said Rosa, when she had presented all her guests, calling Gaussin's attention to a bunch of pink cotton-wool on the table-cloth, on which the chameleon lay shivering.

"Well, where do I come in? Aren't you going to introduce me?" inquired, in a tone of forced joviality, a tall man with grizzly moustaches, correctly dressed, but perhaps a little stiff in his light waistcoat and high collar.

"True, true! Where does Tatave come in?" laughed the women. The mistress of the house carelessly pronounced his name.

Tatave was De Potter, the accomplished musician, the much applauded author of *Claudia* and *Savonarole;* and Jean, who had only caught a glimpse of him at Déchelette's, was astonished to find in the great artist such a lack of geniality, that stern, regular, wooden face, those dull eyes, putting the seal upon a mad, incurable passion which had bound him to that harridan for years, had made him leave wife and children to become a regular guest at that house, where he engulfed a part of his great fortune, his profits from the stage, and where he was treated with less consideration than a servant. You should have seen Rosa's bored expression as soon as he began to tell a story, and the contemptuous way in which she imposed silence upon him; and Pilar never failed to cap her daughter's reproof by adding in a tone of decision,—

"*Just leave us alone, my boy.*"

Jean had old Pilar for a neighbor at table, and tho

flabby old lips, which mumbled as she ate with a noise like that made by an animal, that inquisitive inspection of his plate, were a perfect torment to the young man intensely annoyed as he was by Rosa's patronizing tone, her manner of joking Fanny about the musical evenings at the boarding-house, and the credulity of those poor fools of foreigners who took the manager for a society woman fallen upon evil days. The former "chariot lady," bloated with unhealthy fat, with a stone worth ten thousand francs at each ear, seemed to envy her friend the renewal of youth and beauty due to that young and handsome lover; and Fanny did not lose her temper; on the contrary, she entertained the table, made fun of the boarders in true studio style, of the Peruvian, who, rolling his white eyes, confessed to her his desire to know a great *coucoute,* and the silent homage of the Dutchman puffing like a seal, and gasping behind her chair, "Guess how much potatoes are at Patavia?"

Gaussin, for his part, did not laugh; nor did Pilar, engrossed as she was in watching her daughter's silverware, or, if she spied a fly on the plate before her or on her neighbor's sleeve, leaning forward abruptly to present it, lisping tender phrases, "Eat it, *mi alma, mi corazon,*" to the hideous little beast which had tumbled on to the cloth, a flabby, wrinkled, shapeless mass, like La Desfous' fingers.

Sometimes, when all the flies were in retreat, she would spy one on the sideboard or the glass door, whereupon she would leave her seat and triumphantly capture it. That manœuvre, repeated many times, irritated her daughter, who was certainly very nervous that morning.

"Don't keep getting up every minute; it's tiresome."

In the same voice, two tones lower in the scale of jargon, the mother replied,—

"You people eat: why don't you want him to eat too?"

"Leave the table or keep still; you annoy us."

The old woman answered back, and they began to abuse each other like the pious Spaniards they were, mingling heaven and hell with blackguardisms of the gutter.

"Hija del demonio!"

"Cuerno de Satanas!"

"Puta!"

"Mi Madre!"

Jean stared at them in dismay, while the other guests, accustomed to these domestic episodes, continued to eat tranquilly. De Potter alone intervened, out of regard for the stranger,—

"Come, come, pray don't quarrel."

But Rosa turned furiously upon him: "Why do you thrust your nose in? Fine manners, indeed! Ain't I free to speak? Just go to your wife and see whether I am or not! I've had enough of your fried perch's eyes and the three hairs you've got left. Go and take them to your old turkey; it's high time!"

De Potter smiled, his face a little pale.

"And I must live with this creature!" he muttered in his moustache.

"This creature's quite as good as that one!" she roared, her whole body almost on the table. "And the door's open, you know; off with you—skip!"

"Come, come, Rosa," the poor dull eyes implored. And Mère Pilar, beginning to eat once more, said with such comical phlegm: "Just leave us alone, my boy!" that the whole table roared with laughter, even Rosa, even De Potter, who kissed his still grumbling mistress, and to earn his pardon more fully, caught a fly, and presented it delicately, by the wings, to Bichito.

And that was De Potter, the illustrious composer, the pride of the French school! How did she retain her hold upon him, by what witchcraft,—that creature grown old in vice, vulgar beyond words, with that mother who made her twice as disgusting as she naturally was, by exhibiting her as she would be twenty years later, as if reflected in a silver ball?

Coffee was served on the shore of the lake, in a little rockwork grotto, lined with light silks, which reflected the changing surface of the water,—one of those delicious nests for kissing invented by the story-tellers of the eighteenth century, with a mirror in the ceiling which reflected the attitudes of the old harridans sprawling over the broad couch in a digestive torpor, and Rosa, her cheeks aflame under the paint, stretching back against her musician.

"O my Tatave! my Tatave!"

But that affectionate warmth evaporated with the warmth of the Chartreuse; and one of the ladies having suggested a row on the lake, she sent De Potter to prepare the boat.

"The skiff, you understand, not the Norwegian boat."

"Suppose I tell Désiré—"

"Désiré's at breakfast."

"*The skiff is full* of water; we shall have to bail her out, *nd that's a day's* work."

"Jean will go with you, De Potter," said Fanny, who saw that another scene was imminent.

Sitting opposite each other, with legs apart, each on a thwart, they bailed energetically, without looking at each other, without speaking, as if hypnotized by the rhythm of the water gushing from the two dippers. The shadow of a great catalpa fell in perfumed coolness about them, sharply outlined against the resplendent brightness of the lake.

"Have you been with Fanny long?" the musician suddenly asked, pausing in his work.

"Two years," replied Gaussin, somewhat surprised.

"Only two years! In that case what you see to-day may perhaps be of service to you. It is twenty years since I went to live with Rosa,—twenty years since, on my return from Italy after my three years' incumbency of the *prix de Rome,* I went into the Hippodrome one evening and saw her standing in her little chariot, coming down on me round the turn in the ring, whip in air, with her helmet with eight lanceheads, and her coat covered with gold scales fitting tight to her figure to the middle of her leg. Ah! if any one had told me—"

Plying his dipper once more, he told how at first his people had simply laughed at the liaison; then, when the matter became serious, to what efforts, what entreaties, what sacrifices, his parents had had recourse in order to break it off. Two or three times the girl had been bribed to leave him, but he always joined her again. "Let us try travelling," his mother had said. He travelled, returned, and took up with her again. Then he had consented to marry; a pretty girl, a handsome dowry, and the promise of the Institute for a wedding present. And three months later he left the new establishment for the old one. "Ah! young man! young man!"

He told the story of his life in a passionless voice, without moving a muscle in his face, as rigid as the starched collar that held his head so straight. And boats passed, laden with students and girls, overflowing with song and with the laughter of youth and excitement; how many among those heedless ones might profitably have stopped and taken their share of the lesson!

In the kiosk, meanwhile, as if the world had been passed to bring about a rupture, the old *élégantes* were preaching common-sense to Fanny Legrand. Her little one was pretty to look at, but not a *sou;* what would that bring her to?

"But so long as I love him!"

And Rosa observed with a shrug: "Let her alone; she's going to miss her Dutchman, as I've seen her miss all her fine chances. After her affair with Flamant, however, she did try to become practical, but here she is crazier than ever."

"*Ay! vellaca!*" grumbled Mamma Pilar.

The Englishwoman with the clown's face intervened with the horrible accent to which she owed her long-continued vogue:—

"It was all very well to love love, little one,—love was a very good thing, you know,—but you ought to love money too. Take me, for instance, if I had still been rich, do you suppose my croupier'd have called me ugly, eh?" She jumped up and down in a frenzy and raised her voice to its shrillest pitch: "Oh! but that was terrible. To have been famous in the world, known everywhere like a monument or a boulevard, so well known that you couldn't find a miserable cabman who wouldn't know at once where to go when you said, 'Wilkie Cob!' To have had princes to put my feet on, and kings, when I spit, say that it was pretty! And then to think of that filthy cur who wouldn't have me because I was ugly; and I didn't have enough to buy him for just one night."

And waxing excited at the idea that she should have been called ugly, she abruptly opened her dress.

"The face, yes, I sacrificed that; but the breast and shoulders,—are they white? are they firm and hard?"

She shamelessly displayed her witch's flesh, which had retained its youth to a miraculous degree after thirty years in the furnace, and over which lowered her face, withered and deadly from the line of the neck upwards.

"The boat is ready, mesdames!" called De Potter; and the Englishwoman, fastening her dress over what remained to her of youth, murmured in comical dismay,—

I couldn't go half-dressed to public places, you see."

What an embarkation that was of all those superannuated old Cythereans, in that landscape worthy of Lancret, where the dainty white villas stood out among the new verdure, with the terraces and lawns framing that little lake gleaming as with scales in the sunlight,—blind Sombreuse and the old clown and Desfous, the paralytic, leaving in the wake of the boat the musky odor of their paint!

Jean plied the oars, bending his back to the task, ashamed *and in despair at the* thought that some one might see him

and impute to him some degrading function in that ill-omened, allegorical craft. Luckily, he had facing him, to refresh his heart and eyes, Fanny Legrand, who sat in the stern, near the tiller held by De Potter,—Fanny, whose smile had never seemed to him so youthful, by reason of the contrast, doubtless.

"Sing us something, little one," said La Desfous, softened by the spring weather. In her deep, expressive voice Fanny began the barcarole from *Claudia*, while the musician, moved by that reminder of his first great success, hummed with his mouth closed the orchestral accompaniment, those undulating measures which flit about the melody like the gleam of dancing water. At that hour, in that lovely spot, it was delicious. Some one cried *bravo!* from a terrace near by; and the Provençal, keeping time with his oars, felt a thirst for that divine music from his mistress's lips, a temptation to put his mouth to the spring itself, and to drink in the sunlight, with his head thrown back, forever.

Suddenly Rosa in a savage tone interrupted the singing, irritated by the union of the two voices: "I say there, give us some music when you have done cooing into each other's faces. Do you fancy that that funereal stuff amuses us! We've had enough of it; in the first place it's late, and Fanny must go back to her box."

With an angry gesture she pointed to the nearest pier.

"Steer in there," she said to her lover; "they'll be nearer the station."

It was a brutal sort of dismissal; but the ex-lady of the chariot had accustomed her intimates to her methods of procedure, and no one dared protest. The couple being landed on the shore with a few words of frigid politeness to the young man, and orders to Fanny in a shrill voice, the boat moved away laden with outcries and with a bitter altercation, terminated by an insulting burst of laughter borne to the lovers' ears by the resonance of the water.

"You hear, you hear," said Fanny, livid with rage; "she is making sport of us!"

All her humiliation, all the rankling insults inflicted upon her, recurred to her mind at that last affront, and she enumerated them as they returned to the station, even admitted some things that she had always concealed. Rosa's whole object was to part her from him, to afford her opportunities to deceive him. "When I think of all she has said to me to make me take up with that Dutchman! Just now again they all went at me. I love you too well, you

see; it bothers her in her vices, for she has them all, the vilest, the most monstrous."

She checked herself, seeing that he was very pale, that his lips were trembling as on the evening when he stirred the dunghill of letters.

"Oh! have no fear," she said; "your love has cured me of all those horrors. She and her pestiferous chameleon are equally disgusting to me."

"I don't want you to stay there," said the lover, agitated by unhealthy jealousy. "There is too much filth in the bread you earn; you must go home with me; we will pull through somehow."

She expected that cry, had been trying for a long time to call it forth. And yet she resisted, objecting that it would be very hard to keep house with the three hundred francs from the department, and that they would perhaps have to separate again. "And I suffered so when I left our poor little house!"

Benches were placed at intervals under the acacias which lined the road, with telegraph wires covered with swallows; to talk more at ease, they sat down, both deeply moved, and arm in arm.

"Three hundred francs a month," said Jean; "why, what do the Hettémas do, who have only two hundred and fifty?"

"They live in the country at Chaville, all the year round."

"Well, let's do as they do; I do not care for Paris."

"Really? do you really mean it? oh, my dear! my dear!"

People were passing along the road, a galloping line of asses carrying the débris of a wedding-party. They could not embrace, and they sat motionless, very close together, dreaming of a rejuvenated happiness on summer evenings in the country, sweet with that same perfume of green fields, tranquil and warm, and enlivened by carbine-shots in the distance and by the barrel-organ tunes of a suburban fête.

VIII

THEY settled at Chaville, between the upper and the lower town, along that old forest road called the Pavé des Gardes, in an old hunting-box at the entrance to the woods: three rooms hardly larger than those in Paris, and the same furniture, the cane-seated chair, the painted wardrobe, and to adorn the horrible green paper in their bedroom, nothing but Fanny's portrait, for the photograph of Castelet had its frame broken in moving and was fading away in the lumber-room.

They hardly mentioned poor Castelet now, since the uncle and niece had broken off their correspondence.

"A pretty kind of a friend!" she said, remembering Le Fénat's readiness to promote the first rupture. Only the little girls kept their brother informed of the news, for Divonne had ceased to write. Perhaps she still entertained a grudge against her nephew; or did she guess that the bad woman had returned, to unseal, and criticize her poor, motherly letters in the coarse peasant handwriting.

At times they might have believed that they were still on Rue d'Amsterdam, when they were awakened by the singing of the Hettémas, once more their neighbors, and the whistling of the locomotives passing constantly in both directions on the other side of the road, and visible through the trees of a large park. But instead of the murky glass walls of the great Western station, its curtainless windows, through which could be seen the silhouettes of clerks bending over their work, and the roar and rumble of the sloping street, they enjoyed the silent, green space beyond their little orchard, surrounded by other gardens, by villas in clumps of trees, sliding down to the foot of the hill.

Before starting for Paris in the morning, Jean breakfasted in their little dining-room, with the window open on the broad paved road, grass-grown in spots, and lined by rows of white thorn with its pungent perfume. That road took him to the station in ten minutes, skirting the rustling, chirping park; and when he returned, those sounds grew fainter as the shadows crept out of the thickets to the moss

in the green road, empurpled by the rays of the setting sun, and as the calls of the cuckoos in every corner of the wood blended with the trills of the nightingale among the ivy.

But as soon as they were fairly settled, and his surprise at the unaccustomed tranquillity of his surroundings had subsided, the lover fell a victim anew to the torments of a sterile and prying jealousy. His mistress's rupture with Rosa and her departure from the lodging-house had led to an appalling explanation between the two women, full of ambiguous insinuations, which revived his suspicions, his most disturbing anxieties; and when he went away, when he looked out from the train at their little low house, with just a ground-floor surmounted by a round attic window, his glance seemed to pierce the wall. He would say to himself, "Who knows?" and the thought haunted him even among the papers on his desk.

When he returned at night, he made her give him an account of her day, of her most trivial acts, of her thoughts, generally most uninteresting, which he tried to surprise with a "What are you thinking about? tell me, quick," always fearing that she regretted something or some one in that horrible past, admitted by her every time with the same imperturbable frankness.

When they met only on Sundays and were thirsty for each other, he did not waste time in these insulting and minute searchings of the mind. But now that they were together once more, with no break in their life *à deux,* they tormented each other even in their caresses, in their most secret communing, excited by the dull wrath, the painful consciousness, of the irreparable.

Then, too, their energies seemed to relax; perhaps it was satiety of the senses in the warm envelopment of nature, or more simply the proximity of the Hettémas. Of all the households encamped in the suburbs of Paris, not one perhaps ever enjoyed the freedom of life in the country as that one did,—the delight of going about clad in rags, in hats made of bark, Madame without corsets, Monsieur in canvas shoes; of carrying crusts from the table for the ducks, scrapings for the rabbits; and hoeing and raking and planting and watering.

Oh, that watering!

The Hettémas set about it as soon as the husband, after returning from the office, had exchanged his office coat for a Robinson Crusoe jacket; after dinner they went at it again, and long after nightfall, in the little dark garden,

from which a fresh smell of damp earth arose, could be heard the creaking of the pump, the colliding of the great watering-pots, and elephantine gasps wandering among the flower-beds, with a splashing which seemed to be caused by water falling from the toilers' brows into their watering-pots, and from time to time a triumphant exclamation:—"I've put thirty-two pots on the marrowfat peas!"

"And I fourteen on the balsams!"

They were people who were not content to be happy, but gloated over their own happiness and relished it in a way to make your mouth water; especially the man, by the irresistible way in which he described the joys of their household in winter.

"It's nothing now, but just wait till December, then you'll see! You come home wet and muddy, with all the vexations of Paris on your back; you find a good fire, a bright lamp, the soup smoking on the table, and under the table a pair of clogs filled with straw. Ah! when you've stowed away a dish of sausages and cabbage with a slice of gruyère kept fresh under a cloth, and when you've poured on it a glass of wine that never saw Bercy, free of christening and duty, how pleasant it is to draw your armchair up to the fire, light a pipe while you drink your coffee laced with a drop of brandy, and take a little snooze opposite each other, while the ice melts on the windows! Just a bit of a nap, you know, long enough for the heavy part of the digestion. Then you draw a few minutes, the wife clears the table, hustles about fixing the bedclothes and the hot-water bottle; and when she's gone to bed and the place is warm, in you jump, and you feel a warmth all over your body just as if you'd crawled into the straw in your shoes."

He waxed almost eloquent over his material joys, the hairy, heavy-jawed giant, on ordinary occasions so shy that he could not say two words without blushing and stammering.

That absurd shyness, which contrasted so comically with his black beard and colossal frame, was responsible for his marriage and his tranquil life. Hettéma at twenty-five, overflowing with lusty health, knew nothing of love or women; but one day at Nevers, after a corps dinner, some of his comrades enticed him, half-tipsy, to a house of prostitution and forced him to choose one of the inmates. He left the place in the utmost bewilderment, went there again and again, always chose the same one, paid her debts, took her away, and, taking fright at the idea that some one

might steal her from him, so that he would have to begin a fresh conquest, he ended by marrying her.

"A legitimate household, my dear," said Fanny, with a triumphant laugh, to Jean, who listened to her in dismay. "And it is the cleanest and most virtuous of all of that kind I have ever known."

She affirmed it in the sincerity of her ignorance, for the legitimate households to which she had been admitted doubtless deserved no kinder judgment; and all her ideas of life were as sincere and as false as that.

As neighbors these Hettémas had a calming effect, being always good-humored, capable of rendering services that were not too burdensome, and having an especial horror of scenes, of quarrels in which they must take part, and in general of anything calculated to interfere with a peaceful digestion. The wife tried to initiate Fanny in the science or raising chickens and rabbits, in the salubrious delights of watering, but in vain.

Gaussin's mistress, a child of the faubourg and graduate of studios, did not like the country except in snatches, on picnics, as a place where one can shout and roll on the grass and lose oneself with one's lover. She detested effort and labor, and as her six months' experience as manager had exhausted her power of energy for a long while, she sank into a dreamy torpor, a drunkenness of comfort and fresh air, which almost left her without strength to dress, to arrange her hair, or even to open her piano.

The cares of housekeeping being confided entirely to a country-woman, when, at night, she reviewed her day in order to describe it to Jean, she could think of nothing but a visit to Olympe, gossip over the wall, and cigarettes, heaps of cigarettes, the remains of which disfigured the marble mantel. Six o'clock already! Barely time to slip on a dress and pin a flower in her waist to go and meet him on the grass-grown road.

But with the coming of the fogs and rains of autumn, and night falling so early, she had more than one excuse for not going out; and he frequently surprised her on his return in one of the white woollen *gandouras* with broad pleats, which she put on in the morning, and with her hair twisted in a knot as when he went away. He thought her charming so, with her still youthful flesh, well kept and tempting, which was ready to his hand, with nothing in the way. And yet that lack of energy offended him, alarmed him as a source of danger.

He himself, after a tremendous effort to increase their resources a little without having recourse to Castelet, after passing nights over plans, reproductions of pieces of artillery, caissons, muskets of a new pattern, which he designed for Hettéma, was assailed by the enervating influence of the country and of solitude, by which the strongest and most energetic allow themselves to be overcome, its benumbing seed having been implanted in him by his early childhood in an out-of-the way corner.

And the materiality of their stout neighbors assisted in the process, infecting them, in the endless going and coming from one house to the other, with a little of their mental degradation and their abnormal appetite. Gaussin and his mistress also reached the point of discussing the question of meals and bedtime. Césaire having sent a cask of his "frog's wine," they passed a whole Sunday bottling it, with the door of their little cellar open to the last sun of the year, a blue sky flecked with pink clouds, of the shade of wood-heather. They were not far away from the period of clogs filled with warm straw and the after-dinner nap. Luckily something occurred to divert their thoughts.

He found her one evening highly excited. Olympe had been telling her the story of a little boy, brought up by a grandmother in Morvan. The father and mother, dealers in wood in Paris, had not written or paid any money for months. The grandmother having died suddenly, some bargemen had brought the urchin through the Yonne Canal to turn him over to his parents; but they could not find any one. The wood-yard closed, the mother gone off with a lover, the father become a drunkard, a bankrupt, disappeared! Fine things, these lawful households! And there was the little fellow, six years old, a perfect love, without bread or clothes, in the gutter!

She was moved almost to tears, then said abruptly,—

"Suppose we should take him? Are you willing?"

"What madness!"

"Why so?" And nestling close to him, she continued coaxingly: "You know how I have longed for a child by you; we could bring this one up, give him an education. After a while you love the little ones you pick up in the street as dearly as if they were your own."

She also reminded him what a source of distraction it would be to her, alone as she was all day, growing stupid by dint of overhauling heaps of unpleasant thoughts. A child is a safeguard. Then, when she saw that he had taken

fright at the expense: "Why, the expense is nothing. Just think, six years old! we will dress him with your old clothes. Olympe, who knows what she's talking about, assures me that we should never notice it."

"Why doesn't she take him, then?" said Jean, with the testiness of a man who feels that he is vanquished by his own weakness. He tried to resist, however, resorting to the convincing argument: "And when I am no longer here, what will happen?" He rarely mentioned his departure, in order not to sadden Fanny, but he thought of it, and was reassured by the thought against the dangers of his present mode of life and De Potter's melancholy confidences. "What a complication the child will cause, what a burden he will be to you in the future!"

Fanny's eyes grew dim.

"You are mistaken, my dear; he will be some one to talk to about you, a consolation, a responsibility too, which will give me strength to work, to retain a desire to live."

He reflected a moment, imagined her all alone, in the empty house.

"Where is the little fellow?"

"At Bas-Meudon, with a bargeman who has taken him in for a few days. After that it's the hospital, the almshouse."

"Well, go and get him, as your heart is set on it."

She threw her arms around his neck, and all the evening, as joyous as a child, she played, and sang, happy, exuberant, transfigured. The next morning, in the train, Jean mentioned their decision to Hettéma, who seemed to know about the episode, but to be determined to have no hand in it. Buried in his corner reading the *Petit Journal,* he muttered in the depths of his beard,—

"Yes, I know—the women did it—it's none of my business. Your wife seems to me to be very romantic," he added, showing his face above the paper.

Romantic or not, she was dismayed beyond measure that evening, as she knelt on the floor, a plate of soup in her hand, trying to tame the little fellow from Morvan, who stood against the wall in a shrinking attitude, his head hanging down,—an enormous head with flaxen hair,—and energetically refused to talk, to eat, even to show his face, but repeated again and again in a loud, choking, monotonous voice,—

"*See Ménine,* see Ménine."

"*Ménine* was his grandmother, I imagine. Since two

o'clock I haven't been able to get anything else out of him."

Jean took a hand in trying to make him swallow his soup, but without avail. And there they remained, kneeling so that their faces were on a level with his, one holding the plate, the other the spoon, as if he were a sick lamb, trying to move him by encouraging, affectionate words.

"Let us go to dinner; perhaps we frighten him; he will eat if we stop looking at him."

But he continued to stand there, wild as a hawk, repeating like a little savage his wailing "See Ménine," which tore their hearts, until he fell asleep leaning against the sideboard,—such a deep sleep that they were able to undress him and lay him in the rough, rustic cradle borrowed from a neighbor, without his opening his eyes for a second.

"See how handsome he is!" said Fanny, very proud of her acquisition; and she compelled Gaussin to admire that wilful brow, those refined and delicate features beneath the sunburn of the fields, that perfect little body with the well-knit loins, the full arms, the legs like a young satyr's, already covered with down below the knee. She forgot herself gazing at that childish beauty.

"Cover him up; he'll be cold," said Jean, whose voice made her start, as if awakened from a dream; and as she carefully tucked him in, the little one drew several long sobbing breaths, as if struggling in a sea of despair, notwithstanding his sleep.

In the night he began to talk of his own accord:

"*Guerlande* me, Ménine."

"What does he say? listen."

He wanted to be *guerlanded;* but what did that patois word mean? Jean at all hazards put out his arm and began to rock the heavy cradle; gradually the child became quieter and fell asleep holding in his chubby little hand the hand which he believed to be his "Ménine's," who had been dead a fortnight.

He was like a little wild cat in the house, clawing and biting, eating apart from the others, and growling when any one approached his bowl; the few words that they extorted from him were in the barbarous dialect of Morvan wood-cutters, which no one could ever have understood without the aid of the Hettémas, who were from the same province as he. However, by dint of constant attention and gentleness they succeeded in taming him a little "*un pso,*" as he said. He consented to exchange the rags he wore

when he arrived for the neat warm clothes, the sight of which at first made him tremble with rage as a jackal would, if one should try to dress him in a greyhound's coat. He learned to eat at the table, to use a fork and spoon, and to answer, when any one asked him his name, that in the country "i li dision Josaph."[1]

As for giving him the slightest elementary notions in the way of education, they could not think of that as yet. Brought up in the midst of the woods, in a charcoal-burner's hut, the murmur of rustling, swarming nature haunted his tough little rustic's pate as the sound of the sea rings in the spiral folds of a shell; and there was no way of forcing anything else into it, nor of keeping him in the house even in the most severe weather. In the rain and the snow, when the bare trees stood like columns of frost, he would slip out of the house, prowl among the bushes, search the holes and burrows with the ingenious cruelty of a ferret, and when he returned home, in a state of collapse from hunger, he always had in his torn fustian jacket, or in the pockets of his little breeches, covered with mud to his waist, some stunned or dead creature, a bird or mole or field-mouse, or, in its place, potatoes or beets he had dug in the fields.

Nothing could overcome those poaching, marauding instincts, coupled with a peasant's mania for stowing away all sorts of glittering trifles, copper buttons, bits of jet, tinfoil, which he would pick up, hiding them in his hand, and carry them off to hiding-places worthy of a thieving magpie. All this booty was included by him in a vague, generic name, "the harvest" (*la denrée*), which he pronounced *denraie;* and neither arguments nor blows would have deterred him from making his *denraie* at the expense of everybody and everything.

Only the Hettémas could keep him in order, the draughtsman keeping always within reach, on the table around which the little savage prowled, attracted by the compasses and colored pencils, a dog-whip which he cracked about his legs. But neither Jean nor Fanny would resort to such threats, although the little one, in his dealings with them, was sly, suspicious, untamable even by the most affectionate cajolery, as if *Ménine,* when she died, had deprived him of all power of affection. Fanny sometimes succeeded in keeping him for a moment on her knees, "because she smelt good;" but to Gaussin, although he was very gentle with

[1] They called him Josaph.

him, he was always the wild beast of the first night, with the same suspicious glance and outstretched claws.

That unconquerable, almost instinctive repulsion on the child's part, the inquisitive, mischievous expression of his little blue eyes, with their Albino-like lashes, and, above all, Fanny's sudden and blind affection for the little stranger who had suddenly fallen into their lives, tormented the lover with a new suspicion. Perhaps he was her own child, brought up by a nurse or by her stepmother; and Machaume's death, of which they learned about that time, was a coincidence that seemed to justify his suspicions. Sometimes at night, when he held that little hand, which clung tightly to his,—for the child in the vague land of dreams always thought that *Ménine* was holding it,—he questioned him with all his inward, unacknowledged unrest: "Where do you come from? Who are you?" hoping that the mystery of the little fellow's birth might be made known to him through contact with his warm flesh.

But his anxiety vanished at a word from Père Legrand, who came to ask for assistance in paying for a fence around his deceased helpmeet's grave, and called out to his daughter when he saw Josaph's cradle:—

"Hallo! a kid! you must be pleased, when you've never been able to raise one."

Gaussin was so happy that he paid for the fence without even asking to see the plans, and kept Père Legrand to breakfast.

The old cabman, now employed on the tramway between Paris and Versailles, his face flushed with wine and apoplexy, but still lusty and active under his glazed leather hat, surrounded for the occasion by a heavy *crêpe* band, which made it a genuine "mute's" hat,—the old cabman seemed delighted by his reception at the hands of his daughter's *gentleman,* and came again at intervals, to break bread with them. His white hair *à la* Mr. Punch, surrounding his shaven, bloated face, his majestic, tipsy air, the respect with which he treated his whip leaning it against the wall in a safe corner with the precautions of a nurse made a deep impression on the child; and the old man and he at once became very intimate. One day, just as they had finished dining together, the Hettémas surprised them.

"Oh! excuse us, you are having a family party," said Madame, in a mincing tone, and the words struck Jean in the face as humiliating as a blow.

His family! That foundling who was snoring with his

head on the cloth, that weather-beaten old pirate, with his pipe stuck in the corner of his mouth and the voice of a fishwife, explaining for the hundredth time that two *sous* worth of whipcord would last him six months, and that he hadn't changed his handle for twenty years! His family, nonsense! they were no more his family than she was his wife, that Fanny Legrand, that played out, prematurely old creature, leaning on her elbows amid the cigarette smoke. Within a year it would all have disappeared from his life, leaving only the vague memory of travelling acquaintances or a neighbor *table d'hôte*.

But at other times that thought of approaching departure, which he invoked as an excuse for his weakness when he felt that he was falling, being dragged lower and lower, that idea, instead of comforting him, of encouraging him, caused him to feel more keenly the manifold bonds that held him fast to realize what a wrench that departure would be, not one rupture, but ten ruptures, and that it would cost him dearly to let go that little child's hand, which rested freely in his at night. Even La Balue, the golden thrush who sang and whistled in his too small cage, which they were always going to change, and in which he was forced to stoop, like the old cardinal in his iron cage,—yes, even La Balue had taken possession of a small corner of his heart, and it would hurt to cast him out.

And yet that inevitable separation was drawing nigh; and the gorgeous month of June, which arrayed all nature in festal garb, would probably be the last they would pass together. Was it that that made her nervous and irritable, or was it the burden of Josaph's education, which she had undertaken with sudden ardor, to the intense disgust of the little Morvandian, who sat for hours staring at his letters without seeing or pronouncing them, his forehead locked with a bar like the wings of a farmyard gate? From day to day her woman's nature found vent in violent outbursts and in tears, in constantly recurring scenes, although Gaussin exerted himself to be indulgent; but she was so insulting, her wrath exhaled such reeking fumes of malice and hatred against her lover's youth, his education, his family, the gulf between their two destinies, which fate was about to widen, she was so skilful in touching him on the sensitive spots, that he finally lost his temper too, and answered her.

But his wrath maintained the reserve, the compassion of a man of good breeding, refrained from dealing blows which he deemed too painful and too easily dealt, whereas

she gave free rein to the blind rage of a prostitute, devoid of responsibility or shame, made a weapon of everything, watched with cruel joy on her victim's face the contraction of pain which she caused, then suddenly threw herself into his arms and besought his forgiveness.

The faces of the Hettémas, when they were present at these quarrels, which almost always broke out at the table, just as they were seated and ready to remove the lid of the soup tureen or plunge the knife into the joint, were a study for a painter. They would exchange a glance of comical dismay across the table. Might they venture to eat, or was the leg of mutton about to fly away through the garden with the platter, the gravy, and the stewed beans?

"On condition that there's to be no scene!" they would say whenever there was a suggestion of a reunion of the families; and that was the remark with which they greeted a project for breakfasting together in the forest, which Fanny threw at them over the wall one Sunday. Oh, no! they would not quarrel to-day; it was too fine! And she ran to dress the child and pack the baskets.

Everything was ready, and they were about to start when the postman brought a stout letter for which Gaussin had to sign a receipt, so that he was detained. He overtook the party at the entrance to the woods, and said to Fanny in an undertone,—

"It's from my uncle. He is wild with delight. A superb crop, sold as it stands. He sends back Déchelette's eight thousand francs, with many thanks and compliments for his niece."

"His niece, oh, yes! *à la mode de Gascogne*. The old wretch!" said Fanny, who had lost all her illusions concerning uncles from the South. In a moment she added, with joyful satisfaction: "We shall have to invest that money."

He gazed at her in blank amazement, because he had found her always very scrupulous in money matters.

"Invest? why, it isn't yours."

"Well, you see, I never told you——" with the glance which lost its sparkle at the slightest departure from the truth; Déchelette, like the good fellow he was, having heard what they were doing for Josaph, had written her that that money would help them to bring up the little one. "*But you* know, if it annoys you, we'll send back his eight *thousand francs; he's* in Paris."

The voice of Hettéma, who had discreetly gone on ahead with his wife, echoed through the trees:

"To the right or left?"

"To the right, to the right,—to the Ponds!" cried Fanny; then, turning to her lover: "Come, come, you're not going to begin to eat your heart out over trifles; we're an old couple, deuce take it!"

She knew that trembling pallor of the lips, that glance at the boy, interrogating him from head to foot; but this time there was only a momentary thrill of jealousy. He had reached now the stage of acting the coward from habit, of conceding anything for the sake of peace. "What is the need of tormenting myself, of going to the bottom of things? If this child is hers, what more natural than that she should take him in and conceal the truth from me after all the scenes, all the questionings, I have forced her to submit to! Isn't it better to take things as they are and pass the few remaining months in peace?"

And he plodded along the forest roads through the valley, carrying their picnic luncheon in its heavy basket covered with white cloth, resigned to his fate, his back bent like an aged gardener's, while the mother and child walked together in front of him, Josaph resplendent and awkward in a complete outfit from the *Belle-Jardinière,* which made it impossible for him to run, she in a light *peignoir,* her head and neck bare under a Japanese parasol, her waist less sylph-like than of yore, indolent of gait, and in her lovely twisted hair a broad white streak which she no longer took the trouble to conceal.

In front of them, and farther down the sloping path, the Hettéma couple, in gigantic straw hats like those of the Touarez horsemen, dressed in red flannel and laden with provisions, fishing tackle, nets, crab-spears; and the wife, to lighten her husband's burden, gallantly wearing saltire-wise across her colossal breast the hunting-horn without which the draughtsman could not be induced to walk in the forest. As they walked, they sang:

"J'aime entendre la rame
Le soir battre les flots;
J'aime le cerf qui brame—"[1]

[1] I love to hear the oar
Beating the waves at night;
I love the braying stag—

Olympe's repertory of those sentimental curbstone ditties was inexhaustible; and when one considered where she had picked them up, in the degrading half-light behind closed blinds, and to how many men she had sung them, the husband's serenity as he sang a second to them assumed extraordinarily grand proportions. The remark of the grenadier at Waterloo, "There are too many of them," must have been the key to that man's philosophical indifference.

While Gaussin musingly watched the huge couple plunge into a hollow, whither he followed them at a short distance, a creaking of wheels came up the path with a volley of hearty laughter and childish voices; and suddenly, a few steps away, a wagon-load of little girls, ribbons, and waving hair appeared, in an English cart drawn by a little donkey, with a young girl, hardly older than the others, leading him by the bridle over that rough road.

It was easy to see that Jean belonged to the party whose heterodox costumes, especially that of the fat woman with a hunting-horn slung over her shoulder, had excited the young people to inextinguishable laughter; and the older girl tried to impose silence on them for a moment. But that other Touarez hat called forth a still louder burst of mocking laughter; and as she passed the man who stood aside to make room for the little cart, a pretty smile tinged with embarrassment asked his pardon, and expressed naïve surprise to find that the old gardener's face was so youthful and attractive.

He bowed timidly, blushed with no very clear idea as to what he was ashamed of; and as the cart stopped at the top of the hill at a cross-road, and a babel of little voices read aloud the names on the sign-post, half-effaced by the rain, "Road to the Ponds," "The Grand Huntsman's Oak," "False Repose," "Road to Vélizy," Jean turned and watched them disappear in the green path flecked with sunlight and carpeted with moss, where the wheels rolled as on velvet,—a whirlwind of fair-haired childhood, a wagon-load of happiness arrayed in the colors of spring, with laughter exploding like fireworks under the branches.

A fierce blast on Hettéma's bugle roused him abruptly from his reverie. They had established themselves on the shore of the pond and were unpacking the provisions; and from a distance one could see in the water the reflection of the white cloth spread on the short grass, and of the red flannel jackets standing out amid the verdure like a huntsman's pink coat.

"Come, hurry up; you have the lobster!" cried the fat man; and Fanny's nervous voice added,—

"Was it little Bouchereau who stopped you on the road?"

Jean started at the name of Bouchereau, which carried him back to Castlet, to his sick mother's bedside.

"Yes," said the draughtsman, taking the basket from his hands; "the tall one, the one leading the pony, is the doctor's niece. A daughter of his brother, whom he has taken into his family. They live at Vélizy in summer. She's a pretty girl."

"Oh! very pretty,—especially that brazen-faced air." And Fanny as she cut the bread, watched her lover, disturbed by the far-away look in his eyes.

Madame Hettéma, unpacking the ham the while, solemnly expressed her disapprobation of that fashion of allowing young girls to roam about the woods at will. "You will tell me that it's the English way, and that she was brought up in London; but that doesn't make any difference, it really isn't proper."

"No, but very convenient for adventures."

"Oh! Fanny——"

"Excuse me, I forgot; Monsieur believes in innocent girls."

"Come, come, suppose we have our luncheon," said Hettéma, beginning to take alarm. But Fanny must needs tell all she knew about young girls in society. She had some fine stories on that subject; convents, boarding-schools, were the scenes of them. Girls left those establishments worn out, withered, disgusted with men, not even capable of having children. "And then they give them to you, you dupes! An *ingénue!* As if there was any such thing as an *ingénue!* as if all girls, in society or not in society, didn't know from their birth what's what. I myself had nothing to learn when I was twelve years old; nor had you, Olympe, eh?"

"Of course not," said Madame Hettéma, with a shrug; but the fate of the luncheon engrossed her attention when she heard Gaussin, whose temper was rising, declare that there were girls and girls, and that one could still find in some families——

"Oh! yes, families," retorted his mistress, scornfully, "I like to hear you talk about families; especially your own."

"Hush! I forbid you——"

"Bourgeois!"

"*Wretch.* Luckily this will soon end. I haven't much *longer to live* with you."

"Go, go! clear out! I shall be glad enough."

They were hurling insults at each other's heads, before the maliciously inquisitive child, who lay face downward in the grass, when a terrible blast from the bugle, repeated in a hundred echoes by the pond and the terraced masses of the forest, suddenly drowned their dispute.

"Have you had enough of it? Do you want me to do it again?" And the bulky Hettéma, with purple cheeks and swollen neck, unable to find any other way of making them hold their peace, waited, with the mouthpiece to his lips and the orifice threatening to belch forth afresh.

IX

THEIR quarrels usually lasted but a short time, vanishing under the influence of a little music and Fanny's effusive cajolery; but this time he was more seriously angry with her, and for several days in succession kept the same wrinkle on his brow and maintained the same indignant silence, sitting down to draw immediately after meals and refusing to go anywhere with her.

It was as if he were suddenly ashamed of the abject life he was leading, afraid of meeting again the little cart ascending the path and that guileless youthful smile of which he thought constantly. Then, with the confusion of a vanishing dream, of scenery broken to facilitate the transformations of a fairy spectacle, the apparition became indistinct, faded away in the windings of the forest path, and Jean saw it no more. But there remained in him a substratum of melancholy of which Fanny thought that she knew the cause, and she determined to banish it.

"I have done it," she said to him joyfully one day. "I have seen Déchelette. I have returned the money to him. He agrees with you that it is better so; upon my word, I wonder why. However, it's done. Later, when I am alone, he will remember the little one. Are you satisfied? Are you still angry with me?"

And she described her visit to Rue de Rome, her amazement at finding there, instead of the wild, noisy, caravansary filled with excited crowds, a tranquil, bourgeois household, governed by very strict rules. No more revels, no more fancy-dress balls; and the explanation of the change, written in chalk over the small door of the studio by some parasite, enraged at being refused admittance: "Closed by reason of marriage."

"And that's the truth, my dear. Déchelette, soon after arriving in Paris, lost his head over a skating-rink girl, Alice Doré; he has had her with him a month, keeping house, actually keeping house! A very nice, sweet little creature, a pretty lamb. They make very little noise both together. I promised that we would go and see them; that

will be a little change for us from hunting-horns and barcaroles. What do you say now to the philosopher and his theories? No to-morrow, no *collage*.[1] Ah! I chaffed him well!"

Jean allowed himself to be taken to Déchelette's, whom he had not seen since their meeting at the Madeleine. He would have been vastly surprised then if any one had told him that there would come a time when he would fraternize without a feeling of disgust with that cynical and disdainful former lover of his mistress, and become almost his friend. Even at that first visit, he was surprised to feel so much at home, charmed by the gentle nature and the ingenuous, kindly laughter of that man with the beard of a Cossack and with a serenity of disposition undisturbed by the painful antics of his liver, which gave a leaden tinge to his complexion and the circles around his eyes.

And how readily one could understand the affection he inspired in that Alice Doré, with her long, soft, white hands and her insignificant blond beauty, heightened by the splendor of her Flemish flesh, as golden (*dorée*) as her name, by the glint of gold in her hair and in her eyelashes, fringing the eyelids and making the skin sparkle even to the nails.

Picked up by Déchelette on the asphalt of the skating-rink, among the vulgarities and brutalities of the crowd, and the clouds of smoke which a man, as he cuts a flourish, blows into the painted face of a strumpet, she had been surprised and touched by his courtesy. She found herself a woman once more instead of the poor beast of pleasure she had been; and when he would have sent her away in the morning, conformably to his theories, with a hearty breakfast and a few louis, her heart was so heavy, she said to him so gently and so earnestly, "Keep me a little longer!" that he had not the courage to refuse. Afterwards, partly from self-respect, partly from weariness, he kept his door locked on that fortuitous honeymoon, which he passed in the cool tranquillity of his summer palace, so admirably supplied with the comforts of life; and they lived thus very happily, she because of such tender consideration as she had never known, he because of the happiness which he was bestowing upon that poor creature and her gratitude, being subjected thus for the first time, and without realizing it, to the penetrating charm of real intimacy with a woman, the mysterious

[1] *A slang expression meaning—living as husband and wife though unmarried.*

enchantment of life *à deux,* in community of kindness of heart and gentleness of nature.

To Gaussin the studio on Rue de Rome was a diversion from the base and degrading environment of his life as a petty clerk with an illegitimate household; he enjoyed the conversation of that scholar with artistic tastes, of that philosopher in a Persian dressing-gown as airy and loose as his doctrines, and the tales of travel which Déchelette told in the fewest possible words, and which were so appropriate among the Oriental hangings, the gilded Buddhas, the bronze chimeras, the exotic luxuriousness of that vast hall where the light fell from a high window, the same light that we find in the heart of a park, stirred by the slender foliage of the bamboos, by the denticulated fronds of the tree-ferns, and the enormous leaves of the *stillingias,* mingled with philodendrons as thin and flexible as water-plants seeking shade and moisture.

On Sunday especially, with the great bay-window looking on a deserted street of Paris in summer, there was almost as much country and forest there as at Chaville, minus the promiscuousness of the company and the Hettémas' hunting-horn. There was never any company; but on one occasion Gaussin and his mistress, arriving for dinner, heard several voices in animated conversation as soon as they entered the house. Night was falling, they were drinking *raki* in the conservatory, and the discussion seemed to be quite warm.

"For my part, I consider that five years in Mazas, the loss of one's name, and the ruin of one's life, are a high price to pay for an act of passion and madness. I'll sign your petition, Déchelette."

"That's Caoudal," whispered Fanny, with a start.

Some one rejoined, with a pitilessly curt refusal: "For my part, I'll sign nothing. I'll not connect myself in any way with that rascal."

"And that's La Gournerie!" said Fanny; pressing close to her lover, she murmured: "Let us go, if it annoys you to see them."

"Why so? not at all." In reality he was not quite certain how he should feel when he found himself face to face with those men, but he did not propose to shirk the test, being desirous perhaps to ascertain the present extent of that jealousy which had formed so large a part of his wretched love-affair.

"Let us go in!" he said; and they made their appearance

in the reddish light of the close of day, which shone upon the bald heads and grizzly beards of Déchelette's friends as they reclined on the low divans around an Oriental table with three legs, on which the spiced and milky beverage which Alice was serving trembled in five or six glasses. The women kissed. "You know these gentlemen, Gaussin." said Déchelette, rocking gently in his chair.

Did he know them? Two of them at least were familiar to him, by virtue of his having stared at their pictures for hours in the show-cases of celebrities. How they had made him suffer, what bitter hatred he had conceived for them, the hatred of a successor, a fierce longing to leap upon them when he met them in the street, and claw their faces! But Fanny had well said that that would pass away; now they were simply the faces of acquaintances, almost of kinsmen, distant uncles whom he saw again after many years.

"The youngster's still handsome!" said Caoudal, his gigantic form stretched out at full length, holding a screen over his eyes to protect them from the glare. "And, Fanny, let us look at you!" He lifted himself on his elbow and winked his expert eyes: "The face still holds its own; but the waist,—you do well to lace good and tight; however, console yourself, my girl, La Gournerie is stouter than you are."

The poet pursed up his thin lips disdainfully. Sitting Turkish fashion on his pile of cushions,—since his trip to Algiers he claimed that he could sit no other way,—an enormous, pulpy mass, with no trace of intelligence remaining save his noble forehead beneath a white forest, and his stern negro-like glance, he affected a well-bred reserve with Fanny, an exaggerated courtesy, as if to give Caoudal a lesson.

Two landscape painters with sun-burned, rustic faces completed the party; they too knew Jean's mistress, and the younger of them said to her, pressing her hand,—

"Déchelette has told us the story of the child, and what you have done is very fine, my dear."

"Yes," said Caoudal to Gaussin; "yes, exceedingly *chic.* Not in the least provincial."

She seemed embarrassed by their laudatory words; but at that moment some one stumbled against a piece of furniture in the dark studio, and a voice inquired, "No one *here?"*

"Here's Ezano," said Déchelette.

Jean had never seen him; but he knew how great a place that Bohemian, that imaginative creature, now reformed and married, and chief of a division at the Beaux-Arts, had played in Fanny Legrand's life, and he remembered a package of passionate and charming letters. A small man came forward, hollow-cheeked, wrinkled, walking stiffly, who gave his hand at a distance, kept people at arm's length as a result of the habit of speaking from a platform, of administrative exclusiveness. He seemed much surprised to see Fanny, especially to find her still lovely after so many years.

"Why, Sapho!" and a furtive flush enlivened his cheekbones.

That name Sapho, which carried her back to the past, and brought her nearer to all her former lovers, caused a certain embarrassment.

"And this is Monsieur d'Armandy, who brought her," said Déchelette, hastily, to warn the new-comer. Ezano bowed; they began to talk.

Fanny, reassured when she saw how her lover took the state of affairs, and being proud of him, of his beauty and his youth, in that party of artists and connoisseurs, was very animated, in high feather. Engrossed by her present passion, she hardly remembered her liaisons with those men; but years of cohabitation, of life in common, left behind them the stamp of habits, of peculiarities communicated by contact and surviving it, even to the way of rolling cigarettes, which, like her preference for Maryland tobacco, was a legacy from Ezano.

Without the slightest annoyance Jean remarked that little detail, which would once have exasperated him, experiencing, when he found how calm he was, the joy of a prisoner who has filed his chains and feels that a slight effort will suffice for his escape.

"Hein! my dear Fanny," said Caoudal, in a chaffing tone, pointing to the others, "what a falling off! see how old they are, how they've flattened out! we two are the only ones who hold our own."

Fanny began to laugh: "Ah! I beg your pardon, colonel," —he was called so sometimes because of his moustaches,— "it isn't altogether the same thing. I'm of another promotion."

"Caoudal always forgets that he's an old fogy," said La Gournerie; and at a gesture from the sculptor, whom he knew that he had touched to the quick, he cried in his

strident voice: "Medal of 1840; that's a date to reckon from, my boy!"

Those two old friends always adopted an aggressive tone toward each other; there was an under-current of antipathy between them, which had never separated them, but which came to the surface in their glances, in their lightest words; and it dated from the day when the poet stole the sculptor's mistress. Fanny was no longer of any consequence to them; they had both known other joys, other mortifications, but the bitterness remained, sinking deeper and deeper with the years.

"Just look at us two, and say honestly whether I am the old fogy!" Caoudal stood erect, in the tightly fitting jacket, which showed his bulging muscles, with his chest thrown out, shaking his fiery mane in which not a white hair could be seen.

"Medal of 1840,—fifty-eight years old in three months. Even so, what does that prove? Is it age that makes old men? It's only at the Comédie-Francaise and the Conservatoire that men drool at sixty and keep their heads nodding and totter along with bent back and limp legs and senile tricks of all sorts. *Sacrebleu!* at sixty a man's more erect than at thirty, because he takes care of himself; and the women will love you still as long as your heart remains young and warms and stirs up your whole carcass."

"Do you think so?" said La Gournerie, glancing at Fanny with a sneer. And Déchelette rejoined with his kindly smile,——

"And yet you always said that there's nothing like youth; you're a tiresome fellow."

"It was my little Cousinard who made me change my views,—Cousinard, my new model. Eighteen years old, rounded outlines, dimples everywhere, a Clodeon. And such a bright one, such a typical child of the people, of the Paris of the Market, where her mother sells poultry! She makes absurd remarks that make you want to kiss her; on my word, they do. The other day in the studio she takes up one of Dejoie's novels, looks at the title, *Thérèse,* and throws it down again with her pretty little pout: 'If he'd called it *Poor* Thérèse, I'd have read it all right!' I am mad over her, I tell you."

"Before you know it you'll be keeping house. And six months hence another rupture, tears as big as your fist, distaste for work, and fits of temper when you want to kill everybody."

Caoudal's brow grew dark.

"It is true that nothing lasts. We take up with one another, then part——"

"In that case why take up with one another?"

"Indeed, and what about yourself? Do you think that you are settled for life with your Fleming?"

"Oh! as for us, we are not housekeeping, are we, Alice?"

"Of course not," replied the girl, in a sweet, distraught voice; she was standing on a chair picking glycine and leaves to decorate the table. Déchelette continued,—

"There'll be no rupture between us, hardly a parting. We have taken a lease of two months to be passed together; on the last day we shall separate without surprise on either side and without despair. I shall return to Ispahan,—I have already taken my berth in the sleeper,—and Alice to her little apartment on Rue La Bruyère, which she has not given up."

"On the third floor above the entresol, the most convenient place in the world for throwing oneself out of window!"

As she spoke the young woman smiled, red-cheeked and luminous in the fading light, her heavy bunch of purple flowers in her hand; but the tone of her voice was so deep, so solemn, that no one replied. The wind freshened; the houses opposite seemed taller.

"Let us adjourn to the table," cried the colonel, "and let us say idiotic things."

"Yes, that's the idea, *gaudeamus igitur,*—let us amuse ourselves while we're young, eh, Caoudal?" said La Gournerie, with a laugh that rang false.

A few days later Jean went again to Rue de Rome; he found the studio closed, the great canvas shade lowered over the window, death-like silence from the cellar to the terraced roof. Déchelette had gone at the appointed time, the lease having expired. And he thought: "It is a fine thing to do what one chooses in life, to govern one's mind and one's heart. Shall I ever have the courage to do what he has done?"

A hand was placed on his shoulder.

"How are you, Gaussin?"

Déchelette, looking worn and weary, sallower and sterner than usual, *explained* to him that he had not yet left Paris, *being detained by* some business matters, and that he was

living at the Grand Hotel, having a horror of the studio since that frightful thing happened there.

"What do you mean?"

"To be sure, you don't know. Alice is dead. She killed herself. Wait a moment, till I see if there are any letters for me."

He returned almost immediately; and as he tore the wrappers from the newspapers with nervous fingers, he talked in a low voice, like a somnambulist, without looking at Gaussin, who was walking beside him,—

"Yes, killed herself, threw herself out of the window, as she said the evening you were there. What would you have? for my part, I did not know, I could not suspect. The day I was to go, she said to me calmly: 'Take me, Déchelette; don't leave me alone; I can't live without you now.' That made me laugh. Imagine me with a woman among those Kurds! The desert, the fever, the nights in camp. At dinner she said again: 'I won't be in your way; you will see how good I'll be.' Then, seeing that she annoyed me, she did not insist any farther. Later, we went to the Variétés, where we had a box; it was all planned beforehand. She seemed satisfied, held my hand all the time, and whispered, 'I am happy.' As I was to start during the night, I carried her home in a cab; we were both of us very melancholy, did not say a word. She didn't even thank me for a little package which I slipped into her pocket, to enable her to live in comfort for a year or two. When we reached Rue La Bruyère, she asked me to go up. I refused. 'I entreat you, just as far as the door.' But when I got there, I held to my word; I would not go in. My berth was taken, my trunk packed, and, besides, I had talked too much about going. As I went downstairs, a little heavy-hearted, I heard her call after me something that sounded like, 'Sooner than you,' but I didn't understand till I got down to the street. Oh!"

He paused, his eyes fixed on the ground, before the horrible vision which the sidewalk presented now at every step, that black, inert mass in the agony of death.

"She died two hours later, without a word, without a complaint, her golden eyes looking into mine. Did she suffer? Did she recognize me? We laid her on her bed, fully dressed, a long lace mantle wrapped around her head on one side to conceal the wound in her skull. Very pale, with a little blood on her temple, she was pretty still, and so sweet and gentle! But as I stooped to wipe away that

drop of blood, which was instantly replaced by another, from an inexhaustible source, her face seemed to me to assume an indignant, terrible expression. It was as if the poor girl hurled a silent malediction at me. Indeed, what harm would it have done to remain here a little longer, or to take her with me, ready for anything as she was, and so little trouble? No pride, but obstinacy in keeping to what I had said—— Well, I did not yield, and she is dead, dead by my fault; and yet I loved her."

He grew more and more excited, talked very loud, to the amazement of the people whom he jostled as they walked down Rue d'Amsterdam; and Gaussin, as he passed his former lodging, whose balcony and zinc tent he could see from the street, thought of Fanny and their own story and felt a shudder run through his veins as Déchelette continued:—

"I took her to Montparnasse, without friends or relatives. I wanted to be alone to think about her. And since then I have stayed on here, always thinking of the same thing, unable to make up my mind to go awav, with that idea in full possession of me, and avoiding my house, where I passed two months so happily with her. I live out of doors; I go from place to place; I try to distract my thoughts, to escape that dead woman's eye, which accuses me under a thread of blood."

Possessed by his remorse, he stopped, while two great tears glided down his little flat nose, so kindly, so in love with life, and said,—

"So it is, my friend; and yet I am not cruel. But what I did was a little hard, all the same."

Jean tried to comfort him, attributing everything to chance, to an unkind fate; but Déchelette, shaking his head, repeated through his clenched teeth,—

"No, no; I shall never forgive myself. I would like to punish myself."

That longing for expiation did not cease to haunt him; he talked about it to all his friends, to Gaussin, whom he went to the office to meet in the afternoon.

"Why don't you go away, Déchelette? Travel, work; it will divert your mind," Caoudal and the others said to him again and again, being a little disturbed by his fixed idea, by his persistence in repeating that he was not naturally cruel. At last, one evening,—whether it was that he had felt a desire to see the studio once more before going away, or that he had gone thither in pursuance of a fixed determination to put an end to his misery,—he returned to his

own house; and in the morning, workmen, going down from the faubourg to their work, found him. with his skull fractured, on the sidewalk in front of his door, dead by the same form of suicide as the woman, with the same shocking circumstances, the same horrible commotion caused by despair cast naked into the street.

In the half-light of the studio, a crowd of artists, models, actresses, all the dancers, all the guests of the latest festivities, pushed and jostled one another. There was a noise of tramping feet and whispering, the sounds of a mortuary chapel under the short flame of the tapers. Through the convolvuli and the foliage they gazed at the body, dressed in a gown of flowered silk with gold flowers, a turban on the head to hide the ghastly wound, lying at full length, the white hands by the sides in an attitude that told of the final collapse and surrender, on the low couch, shaded by glycines, where Gaussin and his mistress had become acquainted on the night of the ball.

X

So these ruptures sometimes ended in death! Now, when they quarrelled, Jean no longer dared to mention his departure, he no longer exclaimed in his exasperation: "Luckily this won't last long." She would simply have had to retort: "Very well, go; I will kill myself; I will do as she did." And that threat, which he fancied that he could read in her melancholy expression, in the melancholy songs she sang, and in her reveries when she was silent, disturbed him even to terror.

Meanwhile he had passed the examination which closes the stage of service in the department offices for consular attachés; as he had acquitted himself creditably, he would be appointed to one of the first vacant posts,—it was only a matter of weeks, of days! And all about them, in those last days of the season, as the hours of sunlight grew shorter and shorter, everything was hastening on toward the changes that winter brings. One morning Fanny cried, as she opened the window to the first fog,—

"Look, the swallows have gone!"

One after another the bourgeois country houses put up their shutters; on the Versailles road there was a constant succession of furniture vans, of great country omnibuses laden with bundles, with plumes of green plants on the roof, while the leaves blew away in eddying multitudes, swept along like flying clouds under the low sky, and the windmills stood alone in the bare fields. Behind the orchard, stripped of its fruits and made smaller in appearance by the absence of foliage, the closed chalets, the red-roofed drying-houses of the laundries, huddled together in the melancholy landscape; and on the other side of the house, the railway, no longer masked, extended along the colorless forest in an endless black line.

How cruel to leave her all alone amid those melancholy surroundings! He felt his heart fail him in anticipation; he should never have the courage to bid her adieu. That was precisely what she relied upon, awaiting that supreme moment, and until then maintaining a tranquil demeanor,

never mentioning the subject, true to her promise to place no obstacles in the way of his departure, which had been foreseen and agreed to in the beginning. One day he returned home with this news,—

"I have been appointed."

"Ah; to what place?"

She asked the question with feigned indifference, but the color faded from her lips and the light from her eyes, and her features were so contracted by pain, that he did not prolong the torture: "No, no; not yet. I have let Hédouin have my turn; that gives us at least six months."

Then there was a flood of tears and laughter and frantic kisses, and she stammered: "Thanks, thanks! How happy I will make your life now! That was what made me spiteful, you see,—the thought of your going away." She proposed now to prepare herself better, to resign herself gradually. And then, six months hence, it would no longer be autumn, with the horror of those two deaths in addition.

She kept her word. No more nervous outbreaks, no more quarrels; and, furthermore, to avoid the annoyance of the child's presence, she made up her mind to put him at a boarding-school at Versailles. He came home only on Sunday; and if the new order of things did not at once abate his wild and rebellious nature, it taught him hypocrisy, at all events. They lived in a tranquil atmosphere, the dinners with the Hettémas passed off without a tempest, and the piano was opened once more for the favorite melodies. But at heart Jean was more disturbed, more perplexed than ever, asking himself where his weakness would lead him, and thinking seriously at times of abandoning the consular service for permanent departmental work. That meant Paris, and an indefinite renewal of the lease of his present life; but it meant also the demolition of all his youthful dreams, the despair of his family, and an inevitable rupture with his father, who would never forgive that backsliding, especially when he knew the reasons.

And for whom? For a faded, prematurely old creature, whom he no longer loved—he had proved that to his satisfaction in presence of her lovers. That being so, what witchcraft was there in that life?

One morning in the last days of October, as he entered the train, a young girl's glance met his and suddenly reminded him of his encounter in the woods, of the radiant charm of that child-woman whose image had haunted him

for months. She wore the same light dress which the sun flecked so prettily under the trees, but over it was thrown an ample travelling cloak; and a package of books, a little bag, and a bunch of long reeds and the latest flowers, that lay beside her on the seat, told the story of the return to Paris, of the end of the season in the country. She had recognized him, too, with a half smile quivering in her eyes, as clear and pure as spring water; and for an instant there was the unexpressed concord of identity of thought between those two.

"How's your mother, Monsieur d'Armandy?" suddenly inquired old Bouchereau, whom the bewildered Jean had not noticed at first, buried in his corner, his pale face bending over his newspaper.

Jean answered his question, deeply touched that he should remember him and his; and his emotion was greatly increased when the girl asked about the two little twins, who had written her uncle such a pretty letter to thank him for what he had done for their mother. She knew of them! that thought filled him with joy; then, as he was, it would appear, in an unusually susceptible mood that morning, he instantly became depressed when he learned that they were returning to Paris, and that Bouchereau was about to begin his lectures at the École de Médecin. He would have no further opportunities to see her. And the fields flying by the windows, beautiful but a moment before, seemed dark and dismal to him as if the sun were in eclipse.

The locomotive blew a long whistle; they had arrived. He bowed and lost sight of them; but at the exit from the station they met again, and Bouchereau amid the uproar of the crowd informed him that after the following Thursday he should be at home on Place Vendôme—if his heart prompted him to drink a cup of tea. She took her uncle's arm, and it seemed to Jean that it was she who invited him, without speaking.

After having decided several times that he would call upon Bouchereau, then that he would not—for what was the use of subjecting himself to unnecessary regrets?—he announced at home that there was soon to be a large evening party at the department, which it would be necessary for him to attend. Fanny examined his coat, ironed his white cravat; and when Thursday evening came he suddenly discovered that he had not the slightest wish to go out. But

his mistress argued with him as to the necessity of the task reproaching herself for having monopolized him too much for having selfishly kept him to herself, and she persuaded him, finished dressing him with affectionate playfulness, retouched the bow of his cravat and his hair, laughed because her fingers smelt of the cigarette, which she laid on the mantel and took up again every minute, and it would make his partners turn up their noses. And when he saw her so bright and good-humored, he was filled with remorse for his lie, and would gladly have remained with her by the fire if she had not insisted, "I want you to go—you must!" and lovingly pushed him out into the dark road.

It was late when he returned; she was asleep, and the lamplight shining on that sleep of fatigue reminded him of a similar home-coming, already three years ago, after the terrible revelations that had been made to him. What a coward he had shown himself then! By what strange caprice of fate had the very thing which should have broken his chain riveted it more tightly? He was fairly nauseated with disgust and loathing. The room, the bed, the woman, all were equally horrible to him; he took the light and softly carried it into the adjoining room. He longed so to be alone that he might reflect upon what had happened to him—oh! nothing, almost nothing—

He was in love!

There is in certain words in common use a secret spring which suddenly lays open their inmost depths, and explains them to us in their exceptional private signification; then the word shuts itself up again, resumes its commonplace form and goes its way, unmeaning, worn threadbare by automatic, every-day use. Love is one of those words; those to whom its whole significance has been once made clear will understand the delicious agony in which Jean had been living for an hour, with no very definite idea at first as to what his feelings meant.

On Place Vendôme, in the corner of the salon where they had talked together for a long while, he was conscious of nothing save a sense of perfect comfort, a sweet charm which encompassed him.

Not until he was outside the house once more and the door closed behind him, was he seized by a wild outburst of joy, then by a great wave of faintness as if all his veins were opened:—

"Great God! what is the matter with me?" And the

Paris through whose streets he walked toward his home seemed to him entirely novel, fairylike, magnified, radiant.

Yes, at that hour when the beasts of night are set free and are lurking about, when the filth from the sewers comes to the surface, makes itself manifest and swarms under the yellow gas, the Paris that he saw, he, Sapho's lover, interested in all forms of debauchery, was the Paris that the innocent maiden may see as she returns from the ball with her head filled with dance music, which she hums to the stars beneath her white dress,—that chaste Paris bathed in moonlight wherein virgin souls open to the light! And suddenly, as he ascended the broad staircase at the station, almost on the threshold of his wretched home, he surprised himself saying aloud: "Why, I love her! I love her!" and that was the way he had learned it.

"Are you there, Jean? What on earth are you doing?"

Fanny awoke with a start, frightened because she did not feel him by her side. He must needs go and kiss her, lie to her, describe the ball at the department, tell her whether there were any pretty dresses there and with whom he had danced; but to escape that inquisition and, above all, the caresses which he dreaded, impregnated as he was with the memory of the other, he invented some urgent work, drawings for Hettéma.

"The fire's out; you will be cold."

"No, no."

"At least, leave the door open, so that I can see your lamp."

He must act his lie out to the end, put the table in position and the plans; then he sat down, holding his breath, and thought, recalled all the incidents of the evening, and, to fix his dream in his mind, described it to Césaire in a long letter, while the night wind stirred the branches, which creaked and groaned without the rustling of leaves, while the trains rumbled by one after another, and while La Balue, annoyed by the light, moved about in his little cage and jumped from one perch to the other with hesitating cries.

He told him everything, the meeting in the woods, in the railway carriage, his strange emotion on entering those salons which had seemed to them so dismal and tragic on the day of the consultation, with all the furtive whispering in the doorways and the sorrowful glances exchanged from

chair to chair, and which, on that evening, were thrown open to him, full of life and animation, in a long brilliantly lighted line. Even Bouchereau himself had not that stern countenance, that black eye, searching and disconcerting under its great, bushy eyebrow, but the placid, paternal expression of a worthy bourgeois who is pleased to have people enjoy themselves in his house.

"Suddenly she came toward me, and I saw nothing more. Her name is Irène, my dear uncle; she is very pretty, with an attractive manner, hair of the golden brown common among English girls, a child's mouth always ready to laugh —but not that laughter without merriment that excites one in so many women; a genuine overflow of youth and happiness. She was born in London; but her father was French, and she has no foreign accent at all, only an adorable way of pronouncing certain words, of saying 'uncle,' which brings a caress to old Bouchereau's eyes every time. He took her into his family to relieve his brother, who has numerous children, and to replace Irène's sister, the oldest child, who married the chief of his clinical staff two years ago. But doctors don't suit her at all. How she amused me with the idiocy of that young *savant* who demanded that his fiancée, first of all, should enter into a solemn and formal agreement to bequeath both their bodies to the Anthropological Society! She is a migratory bird. She is fond of boats and the sea; the sight of a bowsprit pointed seaward touches her heart. She told me all this freely, as to a comrade, a true *miss* in her manners despite her Parisian grace; and I listened to her, enchanted by her voice, her laughter, the similarity of our tastes, a secret certainty that the happiness of my life was there at my hand, and that I had only to grasp it, to carry it far away, wherever the chances of 'the career' might send me."

"Do come to bed, my dear."

He started, stopped writing, instinctively hid the unfinished letter: "In a few minutes. Go to sleep; go to sleep."

He spoke angrily, and, bending over the table, listened for the return of sleep in her breathing; for they were very near together, and so far apart!

"Whatever happens, this meeting and this love will be my salvation. You know what my life is; you will have understood, without my ever mentioning it, that it is the same as before, that I have not been able to free myself. But

what you do not know is that I was ready to sacrifice fortune, future, everything, to this fatal habit, in which I was sinking a little deeper every day. Now I have found the mainspring, the prop that I lacked; and in order to give my weakness no further opportunity, I have sworn never to go to that house again until we have separated and I am free. To-morrow I make my escape."

But he did not do it the next day or the day after. He needed some excuse for flight, some pretext, the climax of a quarrel in which one exclaims, "I am going away!" to cover his failure to return; and Fanny was as sweet and cheerful as in the early illusion-ridden days of their housekeeping.

Should he write, "It is all over between us," without any further explanations? But that violent creature would never be resigned to that, she would ferret him out, would pursue him to the door of his house, of his office. No, it would be much better to attack her face to face, to convince her of the irrevocableness, of the finality of the rupture, and to enumerate the reasons for it without anger, but without pity.

But with these reflections the dread of a suicide like Alice Doré's recurred to his mind. In front of their house, on the other side of the street, was a lane running down to the railroad track and closed by a gate; the neighbors went that way when they were in a hurry, and walked along the track to the station. And in his mind's eye, the Southerner saw his mistress, after the final scene, rush across the road, down the lane, and throw herself under the wheels of the train which whirled him away. That dread beset him so, that the bare thought of that gate between two ivy-covered walls made him postpone the explanation.

If he had only had a friend, some one to take care of her, to assist her in the first paroxysm; but living underground as they were, like mountain rats in their *collage,* they knew no one; and the Hettémas, those abnormal egoists, shiny and swimming in fat, whose animalism became more marked with the approach of the season for hibernating, like the Esquimaux, were not people upon whom the poor creature could call for help in her despair and her abandonment.

He must break with her, however, and do it quickly. Despite his *promise* to himself, Jean had been to Place *Vendôme two or* three times, and had fallen deeper and

deeper in love; and although the subject had not as yet been mentioned, the hearty welcome accorded him by old Bouchereau, and Irène's attitude, wherein reserve was blended with affectionate indulgence and what seemed to be excited anticipation of a declaration,—everything urged him to delay no longer. And then, too, the torture of lying, the pretexts he invented to satisfy Fanny, and the species of sacrilege in going from Sapho's kisses to lay his respectful, faltering homage at the other's feet.

XI

While he was hesitating between these alternatives, he found a card on his table at the department, the card of a gentleman who had already called twice during the morning, said the usher, with a certain respect for the following nomenclature:—

C. GAUSSIN D'ARMANDY,
President of the Submersionists of the Rhone Valley,
Member of the Central Committee of Study and Vigilance,
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Uncle Césaire in Paris! Le Fénat, a delegate, member of a vigilance committee! He had not recovered from his stupor when his uncle appeared, still as brown as a pineapple, with the same wondering eyes, the laugh wrinkling his temples, and the beard of the days of the League; but, instead of the everlasting fustian jacket, a new broadcloth frock-coat buttoned tightly over his stomach and endowing the little man with truly presidential majesty.

What brought him to Paris? The purchase of an elevating machine for the immersion of his new vines,—he uttered the word *élévatoire* with an air of conviction which magnified him in his own eyes,—and to arrange for a bust of himself which his colleagues desired as an ornament to the directors' room.

"As you have seen by my card," he said modestly, "they have chosen me president. My idea of submersion is making a great sensation in the South. And to think that I, Le Fénat, am actually the man to save the vineyards of France! Only the crazy fellows are good for anything, you see."

But the principal object of his journey was the rupture with Fanny. Realizing that the affair was dragging, he had come to lend a hand "I know all about such creatures, as you can imagine. When Courbebaisse let his go, in order to get married——" Before attacking his story, he stopped, unbuttoned his coat and produced a little wallet *with well-rounded* sides.

"In the first place, relieve me of this. Take it, I say! money—to grease the wheels." He misunderstood his nephew's gesture and thought that he refused from motives of delicacy. "Take it! take it! It makes me proud to be able to repay the son for a little of what the father has done for me. Besides, Divonne wants me to do it. She knows all about the affair, and is so glad to know that you're thinking of marrying and shaking off your old crampfish!"

Jean thought that "old crampfish" was a little unjust in Césaire's mouth after the service his mistress had done him, and he replied with a touch of bitterness,—

"Take back your wallet, uncle; you know better than any one how indifferent Fanny is to such considerations."

"Yes, she was a good girl," said the uncle, by way of funeral oration; and he added, winking his crow's foot,—

"Keep the money all the same. There are so many temptations in Paris that I prefer to have it in your hands instead of mine; and then, too, you need it for ruptures just as you do for duels."

With that he rose from his chair, declaring that he was dying of hunger and that that momentous question could be discussed more satisfactorily at the breakfast table, fork in hand. It was the typical airy, jesting tone of the Southerner in discussing questions relating to women.

"Between ourselves, my boy,"—they were seated in a restaurant on Rue de Bourgogne, and the uncle, his napkin tucked in his neck, was beaming with satisfaction, while Jean nibbled with the ends of his teeth, unable to eat,—"it seems to me that you take the thing too tragically. I know very well that the first step is hard, the explanation an infernal bore; but if you feel that it's too much for you, say nothing at all,—do as Courbebaisse did. Up to the very morning of the wedding, La Mornas knew nothing about it. At night, on leaving his intended, he would go to the place where the singer was squalling and escort her home. You will say that that wasn't very regular, nor very honest either. But when one isn't fond of scenes, and with such terrible creatures as Paola Mornas! For nearly ten years that tall, handsome fellow had trembled before that little hussy. When it came to cutting loose, he had to manœuvre, to resort to stratagem." And this is how he went about it.

On the day before the wedding, one Fifteenth of August,

the day of the great festival, Césaire proposed to the young woman that they should go and fish in the Yvette. Courbebaisse was to join them for dinner; and then they would all three return together on the following evening, when Paris would have evaporated its odor of dust, of exploded fire-crackers and oil-lamps. She assented. Behold them both lying at full length on the bank of that little stream, which purls and gleams between its low shores, and makes the fields so green and the willows so leafy. After the fishing, the bath. It was not the first time that he and Paola had swum together, like two boys, like comrades; but on that day that little Mornas, with her bare arms and legs, her perfectly moulded gypsy-like body, to which the wet costume clung closely everywhere—perhaps, too, the thought that Courbebaisse had given him *carte blanche*. Ah! the little wretch! She turned, looked him in the eyes, and said sternly,—

"You understand, Césaire; don't try that again."

He did not insist, for fear of spoiling his chances, but said to himself, "I will wait till after dinner."

Very merry the dinner was, on the wooden balcony of the inn between the two flags which the landlord had hoisted in honor of the Fifteenth of August. It was very warm, the sweet hay was very fragrant, and they could hear the drums and fireworks and the music of the hurdy-gurdy trundling through the streets.

"How stupid it is of that Courbebaisse not to come till to-morrow," said La Mornas, stretching out her arms, with a gleam of champagne in her eyes. "I feel like having some fun to-night."

"Gad! and so do I!"

He was leaning by her side on the balcony rail, which was still burning hot from the scorching rays of the sun, and slyly, as an experiment, slipped his arm around her waist, "Oh, Paola! Paola!" That time, instead of being angry, the singer began to laugh, but so loud and heartily that he ended by doing the same. A similar attempt was repulsed in the same way in the evening, when they returned from the fête, where they had danced and eaten sweets; and as their bedrooms adjoined, she sang to him through the partition: "You are too small, oh! you are too small,"—with all sorts of uncomplimentary comparisons between Courbebaisse and himself. He was strongly tempted to retort, to call her the widow Mornas; but it was too soon. The next day, however, as they sat before a bounti-

ful breakfast, and when Paola had become impatient and finally anxious at her man's failure to appear, it was with considerable satisfaction that he drew his watch and said solemnly:

"Noon! it is all over."

"What do you mean?"

"He is married."

"Who?"

"Courbebaisse."

Vlan!

"Ah! my boy, what a blow! In all my love-making I never received such a one. And on the instant she insisted on starting off. But there was no train till four o'clock. And meanwhile the unfaithful one was scorching the rails of the P. L. and M. on his way to Italy with his wife. Thereupon she turned on me again and took it out of me with her fists and her claws,—such luck!—when I had turned the key in the door; then she went for the furniture, and finally fell on the floor in a terrible attack of hysteria. At five they put her on her bed and held her there; while I, all torn and bleeding as if I had just been through a thicket of brambles, hurried off to find Doctor d'Orsay. In such affairs it's just the same as it is in duelling, you should always have a doctor in attendance. Fancy me rushing along the road with an empty stomach, and in such a hot sun! It was dark when I returned with him. Suddenly, as I approached the inn, I heard the sound of voices and saw a crowd under the windows. Great God? Great God? had she killed herself? had she killed some one else? With La Mornas the latter was more probable. I rushed forward, and what did I see? The balcony strung with Venetian lanterns, and the singer standing there, consoled and superb, wrapped in one of the flags and shrieking the *Marseillaise* as a contribution to the imperial holiday, above the applauding multitude.

"And that, my boy, is how Courbebaisse's liaison came to an end; I won't say that it was all ended at one stroke. After ten years of imprisonment, one must always expect a brief period of surveillance. But the worst of it fell on me, at all events; and I will stand as much from yours, if you choose."

"Ah! uncle, she's not the same kind of a woman."

"Nonsense," said Césaire, breaking the seal of a box of cigars and holding them to his ear to make sure that they were dry; "you're not the first man who has left her."

"That is true enough."

And Jean joyfully grasped at that suggestion, which would have torn his heart a few months before. His uncle and his amusing story really encouraged him a little, but what he could not endure was the living a twofold lie for months, the hypocrisy, the division of his time; he could never make up his mind to that, and had waited only too long.

"What do you mean to do, then?"

While the young man was struggling with his perplexities, the member of the vigilance committee combed his beard, experimented with smiles, attitudes, different ways of carrying the head, then inquired with a careless air,—

"Does he live very far from here?"

"Who, pray?"

"Why, this artist, this Caoudal, whom you suggested to me for my bust. We might go and inquire his prices while we are together."

Caoudal, although he had become famous, was a great spendthrift and still lived on Rue d'Assas, the scene of his early successes. Césaire, as they walked thither, inquired concerning his rank as an artist; he would ask a big price, of course, but the gentlemen of the committee insisted upon a work of the first order.

"Oh! you need have no fear, uncle, if Caoudal is willing to undertake it." And he enumerated the sculptor's titles,—Member of the Institute, Commander of the Legion of Honor, and a multitude of foreign orders. Le Fénat opened his eyes in amazement.

"And you are friends?"

"Very good friends."

"What a place this Paris is? What fine acquaintances one makes here!"

Gaussin would have been somewhat ashamed to confess that Caoudal was one of Fanny's old lovers, and that she had brought them together. But one would have said that Césaire was thinking of it.

"Is he the one who did that Sapho we have at Castelet? Then he knows your mistress and can help you, perhaps, to break with her. The Institute, the Legion of Honor,—those things always make an impression on a woman."

Jean did not reply; perhaps he too thought that he might make use of the first lover's influence.

The uncle continued with a hearty laugh:—

"*By the way,* you know the bronze is no longer in your *father's room.* When Divonne learned, when I was unlucky

enough to have to tell her that it represented your mistress, she wouldn't have it there. Considering the consul's whims, his objections tc the slightest change, it wasn't an easy matter to move it, especially without letting him suspect the reason. Oh, these women! She managed so cleverly that to-day Monsieur Thiers presides over your father's mantel, and poor Sapho lies in the dust in the windy chamber, with the old firedogs and cast-off furniture; she suffered too in the moving,—her head-dress was smashed and her lyre broken off. Doubtless Divonne's spite was the cause of her misfortune."

They reached Rue d'Assas. In view of the modest, hard-working aspect of that city of artists, of studios with numbered barn-like doors, opening on both sides of a long courtyard at the end of which were the ugly buildings of a district school with a perpetual murmur of reading, the president of the Submersionists conceived fresh doubts as to the talent of a man so modestly quartered; but as soon as he entered Caoudal's studio, he knew what to expect.

"Not for a hundred thousand francs, not for a million!" roared the sculptor at Gaussin's first word; and slowly raising his long body from the couch on which he lay in the center of the disorderly, neglected studio, he added: "A bust! Oh, yes! just look at that mass of plaster in a thousand pieces on the floor,—my group for the next Salon, which I have just pulverized with a mallet. That's all I care for sculpture, and tempting as monsieur's lineaments are——"

"Gaussin d'Armandy, president——"

The uncle collected all his titles, but there were too many of them; Caoudal interrupted him and turned to the younger man,——

"You are staring at me, Gaussin. Do you think I have grown old?"

It was quite true that he looked his full age in that light from above falling upon the scars, the furrows and wrinkles of his dissipated, fatigued face, his lion's mane showing bald spots like old carpet, his cheeks hanging and flabby, and his moustache of the color of tarnished gilt, which he no longer took the trouble to curl or dye. What was the use? Cousinard, the little model, had gone. "Yes, my dear fellow, with my moulder, a savage, a brute, but twenty years old!"

His tone was fierce and ironical, and he strode up and down the studio, kicking aside a stool that stood in his

path. Suddenly, halting in front of the mirror with a carved copper frame over the couch, he looked at himself with a ghastly grimace: "What an ugly, played-out thing! veins and dewlaps like an old cow!" He put his hand to his face, and in a piteous, comical tone, with the foresight of an old beau bewailing his charms: "To think that I shall regret even this, next year!"

The uncle was horrified. The idea of that academician talking in that tone and telling about his vile love-affairs! So there were crackbrains everywhere, even in the Institute; and his admiration for the great man lessened with the sympathy he felt for his weaknesses.

"How's Fanny? Are you still at Chaville?" said Caoudal, suddenly subsiding and sitting down beside Gaussin, and tapping him familiarly on the shoulder.

"Oh, poor Fanny! we haven't much longer to live together."

"Are you going away?"

"Yes, very soon; and I am going to be married first. I have got to leave her."

The sculptor laughed a savage laugh.

"Bravo! I am delighted to hear it. Avenge us, my boy; avenge us on those trollops. Deceive them, throw them over, and let them weep, the wretches! You will never do them as much harm as they have done to others."

Uncle Césaire was triumphant.

"You see, monsieur doesn't take such a tragic view of the affair as you do. Can you imagine such a zany? What keeps him from leaving her is the fear that she will kill herself!"

Jean frankly avowed the effect that Alice Doré's suicide had made upon him.

"But this is a different matter," said Caoudal, earnestly. "That girl was a melancholy, soft creature, with hands always falling at her sides,—a poor doll without any sawdust. Déchelette was wrong in thinking that she died for him. A suicide from fatigue and disgust with life. While Sapho—ah! yes, she'll kill herself! She's too fond of love for that; she'll burn to the end, down to the *bobèches*. She's of the race of *jeunes premiers,* who never change their line of parts and die, toothless and without eyelashes, in their *jeune premier* costumes. Just look at me. Do I kill myself? It's of no use for me to grieve. I know perfectly well that now she has gone I shall take another, that I must always have one. Your mistress will do as I do, as sh

has done before. Only she is no longer young, and it will be a harder task."

Still the uncle was triumphant: "You feel better now, eh?"

Jean said nothing, but his scruples were overcome and his mind made up. They were going away, when the sculptor called them back to show them a photograph which he took from the dust on his table and wiped with his sleeve. "See, there she is. Isn't she a pretty one, the hussy, to kneel before? Those legs, that breast!" The contrast was terrible between those glowing eyes, that passionate voice, and the senile trembling of the great, spatula-shaped fingers in which quivered the smiling image of Cousinard, the little model, with her dimpled charms.

XII

"Is it you? How early you have come home!"

She came in from the garden, her skirt full of fallen apples, and ran quickly up the steps, disturbed by her lover's manner, which was at once embarrassed and determined.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing; it's this weather, this bright sunshine. I wanted to make the most of the last fine day to take a turn in the forest, we two. What do you say?"

She gave her street urchin's cry, which came to her lips whenever she was pleased.

"Oh, what luck!" For more than a month they had not been out, housed by the rains and winds of November. It was not always entertaining in the country; one might as well live in the Ark with Noah and his beasts. She had a few orders to give in the kitchen, because of the Hettémas, who were coming to dinner; and while he waited outside on the Pavé des Gardes, Jean gazed at the little house, warmed by that mild Indian summer light, and at the broad moss-covered pavement of the country street, with that farewell, all-embracing and endowed with memory, which we say with our eyes to places we are about to leave.

The window of the living-room was wide open, so that he could hear the warbling of the thrush alternating with Fanny's orders to the servant: "Be sure and remember to have it ready at half-past six. First you will serve the wild duck. Oh! I must give you the table linen." Her voice rang out clear and happy among the noises of the kitchen and the twittering of the bird pluming himself in the sun. And he, knowing that their household had only two hours more to live, felt sick at heart in presence of those festal preparations.

He longed to go in, to tell her everything, on the spot, at one stroke; but he dreaded her shrieks, the horrible scene which the neighbors would overhear, and a scandal that would stir Upper and Lower Chaville to their depths. He knew that when she had thrown off all restraint, nothing had any effect upon her, and he adhered to his plan of taking her into the forest.

"Here I am, all ready."

She joyously took his arm, warning him to speak low and walk fast as they passed their neighbors' house, fearing that Olympe would want to accompany them and spoil their little party. Her mind was not at rest until they had crossed the track and turned to the left into the woods.

It was a bright, mild day, the sun's rays sifting through a silvery, floating mist which bathed the whole atmosphere, clung to the thickets, where some trees still displayed magpies' nests and tufts of mistletoe, at a great height among the few golden leaves clinging to the branches. They heard the cry of a bird, maintained without a break, like the noise made by a file, and those blows of the beak on the wood which answer the woodcutter's axe.

They walked slowly, keeping step on the rain-soaked ground. She was warm from having walked so fast; her cheeks were flushed, her eyes sparkled, and she stopped to take off the lace mantle, a gift from Rosa, which she had thrown over her head as she came out,—a fragile and costly relic of bygone splendors. The dress she wore, a poor black silk, ripped under the arms and at the waist, had been familiar to him for three years; and when she raised it, walking in front of him because of a puddle, he saw that the heels of her boots were badly worn.

How cheerfully she had endured that semi-poverty, without regret or lamentation, thinking solely of him, of his comfort, never happier than when she was rubbing against him, her hands clasped on his arm. And Jean, as he glanced at her, rejuvenated by that new supply of sunshine and of love, marvelled at the never-failing energy of such a creature, at the wonderful power of forgetting and forgiving which enabled her to retain such a store of cheerful spirits and heedless gayety, after a life of passions, of disappointments and tears, all marked upon her face, but vanishing at the slightest effusion of merriment.

"It's a mushroom; I tell you it's a mushroom!"

She plunged into the underbrush up to her knees in the dead leaves, returned with dishevelled hair and her dress torn by the brambles, and pointed out the little network at the foot of the mushroom which distinguishes the genuine from the false variety. "You see, it has the *tulle!*" And she was triumphant.

He did not listen; he was thinking of other things, asking himself: "*Is this* the best time? Shall I?" But his courage failed him; she was laughing too heartily, or the place

was not favorable; and he led her on and on like an assassin planning his crime.

He was on the point of making up his mind, when, at a bend in a path, some one appeared and disturbed their *tête-à-tête,*—the keeper of that district, Hochecorne, whom they sometimes met. A poor devil, who had lost, one after another, in the little house in the woods on the edge of the pond, which the state allotted him, two children and his wife, all by malignant fevers. At the time of the first death the doctors declared the house unhealthy, as being too near the water and its emanations; but, despite the certificates and reports, they had left him there two years, three years, long enough to see his whole family die with the exception of one little girl, with whom he had finally moved into a new house on the outskirts of the woods.

Hochecorne had a square Breton face, with bright, brave eyes, a forehead receding beneath his forage cap,—a typical specimen of fidelity to duty, of superstitious obedience to all orders; he had his rifle barrel over one shoulder and on the other the head of his sleeping child, whom he was carrying.

"How is she?" Fanny inquired, smiling at the little four-year-old girl, pale and shrunken with fever, who awoke and opened her great eyes surrounded by pink circles. The keeper sighed.

"Not very well. I take her everywhere with me, but it's no use: she doesn't eat anything, she doesn't want anything; I can't help thinking it was too late when we changed the air, and that she had already caught the disease. She's so light—just see, madame, you'd think she was a leaf. One of these days she'll run away like the others! Good God!"

That "good God!" muttered in his mustache, was the whole of his revolt against the cruelty of departments and clerks.

"She is trembling; she seems to be cold."

"It's the fever, madame."

"Wait a moment; we will warm her." She took the mantle that was hanging on her arm and wrapped the little one in it "Yes, yes, let it stay; it shall be her bridal veil later."

The father smiled a heartbroken smile, and shaking the child's hand,—she had fallen asleep again and was ashen-hued like a little dead girl, in all that white,—he bade her thank the lady, then went his way with a "good God!" drowned by the cracking of the branches under his feet.

Fanny was no longer merry, but clung closely to him wi

all the timorous fondness of the woman whom her emotion, be it sad or joyous, draws nearer to the man she loves. Jean said to himself, "What a kind-hearted girl!" but without weakening in his resolve, on the contrary becoming more determined to put it in execution; for Irène's face rose before him on the sloping path on which they were entering, the memory of the radiant smile he had met in that path, which had taken his heart captive at once, even before he knew its enduring charm, the secret spring of intelligence and sweetness of character. He reflected that he had waited until the last moment, that it was Thursday. "Come, I must do it;" and, spying a cross-road a short distance away, he mentally fixed upon that as the limit.

It was a clearing where the wood had recently been cut away, trees lying prostrate amid chips, fragments of bark, twigs, and charcoal kilns. A little farther on was the pond, from which a white vapor arose, and on the shore the little abandoned house, with its dilapidated roof, windows open and broken, the lazaretto of the Hochecornes. Beyond, the woods ascended toward Vélizy, a vast hillside of ruddy foliage of lofty trees, crowded closely together and melancholy to look upon. Suddenly he stopped.

"Suppose we rest a moment?"

They sat down on a long trunk lately felled, an old oak whose branches could be counted by the wounds of the axe. It was a warm corner, enlivened by a pallid reflection of the sun's rays, and by a perfume of belated violets.

"How nice it is here!" she said, letting her head fall languidly on his shoulder and seeking the place for a kiss in his neck. He drew back a little, took her hand. Thereupon she took alarm at the expression of his face, which had suddenly grown stern.

"What's the matter? What is it?"

"Bad news, my poor girl. You know Hédouin, who went away in my place." He spoke hesitatingly, in a hoarse voice, the sound of which astonished himself, but which gained in firmness toward the end of the story he had prepared beforehand. Hédouin had fallen sick on arriving at his post, and he was appointed by the department to replace him. He had concluded that that would be easier to say, less painful than the truth. She listened to him to the end, without interrupting him, her face of a grayish pallor, her eyes staring into vacancy. "When are you going?" she asked, withdrawing her hand.

"Why, this evening, to-night." And in a false, whining

voice he added, "I intend to pass twenty-four hours at Castelet, then sail from Marseilles."

"Enough, don't lie to me!" she cried with a savage explosion which brought her to her feet. "Don't lie to me any more; you don't know what you're doing. The truth is that you're going to be married. Your family's been working on you long enough. They're so afraid that I'll keep you, that I'll prevent you from going in search of the typhus or the yellow fever! At last they're satisfied. The young lady's to your taste, of course. And when I think how I fussed over the knot in your cravat that Thursday! What an idiot I was, eh?"

She laughed a ghastly, atrocious laugh, which distorted her features and showed the gap made on one side by the breaking—of recent occurrence, doubtless, for he had never before noticed it—of one of her lovely, pearly teeth of which she was so proud; and the absence of that tooth in that clay-colored, wrinkled, distorted face caused Gaussin a horrible pang.

"Listen to me," he said, taking her arm and forcing her to sit close beside him. "It is true; I am going to be married. My father was set upon it, as you know so well; but what difference can that make to you, since I am to leave France?"

She released herself, preferring to keep her temper at the boiling point.

"And it was to tell me this that you made me walk a league through the woods! You said to yourself: 'At all events, they won't hear her if she cries.' But no: not an outcry, you see, not a tear. In the first place, I've had my fill of a pretty boy like you; you can go, I sha'n't be the one to call you back. Run away to the Indies with your wife, your little one, as they say where you come from. She must be a sweet creature, the little one, ugly as a gorilla, or else *enceinte* with a big waist, for you're as big a gull as those who chose her for you."

She no longer restrained herself, launching out upon a sea of insults and abominations, until she was able to do no more than falter in his face, tauntingly, as one shakes one's fist, "Coward! liar! coward!"

It was Jean's turn to listen to her without a word, without attempting to stop her. He liked her better so, insulting, degraded, Père Legrand's own daughter; the separation would be less cruel. Did she realize it? At all events, she suddenly ceased, fell at her lover's feet, her head and breas

foremost, with a great sob which shook her whole frame, and from which emerged a broken wail: "Forgive me! mercy! I love you; I have nobody but you. My love, my life, do not do this thing; do not leave me! What do you suppose will become of me?"

He began to yield to her emotion. Oh! that was what he had dreaded. The tears rose from her to him, and he threw back his head to keep them in his overflowing eyes, trying to calm her by stupid words, and by insisting upon that sensible argument, "Why, as long as I must leave France, anyway."

She sprang to her feet, crying in words which disclosed her whole hope,—

"Ah! but you would not have gone. I would have said to you, 'Wait, let me love you still.' Do you suppose that it happens twice to a man to be loved as I love you? You have time enough to marry, you are so young; but it will be all up with me before long. I shall be at the end of my strength, and then we shall part naturally."

He tried to rise; he had courage enough for that, and to say to her that all that she could do would be of no avail; but by clinging to him, dragging herself on her knees through the mud that still remained in that hollow spot, she forced him to resume his seat; and kneeling before him, twining her arms around him, with her lips and the clinging embrace of her eyes, her childlike caresses, patting that stern face with her hands, twining her fingers in his hair, she tried to kindle anew the cold embers of his love, she reminded him in whispers of their past happiness, of their joyous Sunday afternoons. All that was nothing compared to the happiness she would give him hereafter.

And while she whispered in his ear words like these, great tears rolled down her face, distorted as it was by an expression of anguish and terror, and she struggled and shrieked in the voice that one hears in dreams: "Oh, it cannot be! tell me that it isn't true that you are going to leave me!" And more sobs and groans and calls for help, as if she saw a knife in his hand.

The executioner was hardly more courageous than the victim. He feared her wrath no more than her caresses, but he was defenseless against that despair, that braying which filled the woods and died away over the fever-laden, stagnant water whereon the sun lay, red and melancholy. He expected to suffer, but not so intensely as that; and it required all the dazzling splendor of the new love to enable

him to resist thè impulse to lift her with both hands and say to her, "I will stay; hush! I will stay."

For how long a time did they thus exhaust each other's strength? The sun was no longer aught but a red bar, constantly narrowing, on the horizon; the pond was of a slate-gray hue, and one would have said that its unhealthy vapor was invading the moor and the woods and the hillsides opposite. In the growing darkness he saw nothing but that pale face raised to his, that open mouth emitting a lament to which there was no end. A little later, when it was quite dark, her cries subsided. Then there was the rushing sound of floods of tears, without end, one of those showers that follow the greatest fury of the tempest, and from time to time an "Oh!" deep and low, as if called forth by some horrible vision which she drove away and which constantly returned.

Then nothing at all. It was all over; the beast was dead. A cold north wind arose, rustled among the branches, bringing the echo of a distant clock striking the hour.

"Come, let us go; don't stay here."

He raised her gently, and felt that she was like wax in his hands, as submissive as a child and convulsed by heartrending sobs. It seemed to him that she retained a certain dread, a certain respect, for the man who had shown himself so strong. She walked beside him, keeping step with him, but timidly, without taking his arm; and to see them thus, walking uncertainly in gloomy silence along the paths where the yellow reflection of the ground guided them, one would have said that they were a couple of peasants returning home exhausted after a long and fatiguing day in the open air.

As they came out of the woods a light appeared at Hochecorne's open door, and against it they saw the silhouettes of two men. "Is that you, Gaussin?" asked Hettéma, walking toward them with the keeper. They were beginning to be anxious because of their failure to return and of the groans they had heard in the woods. Hochecorne was just going to get his gun, to set out in search of them.

"Good-evening, monsieur, madame. The little one's much pleased with her shawl. I had to put it in the bed with her."

It was their last act in common, that almsgiving of a short time before; their hands had joined for the last time around the moribund's little body.

"*Good-night,* good-night, Père Hochecorne." And they *hurried* away, all three, toward the house, Hettéma still

greatly puzzled concerning those noises which filled the woods. "They rose and fell and rose again; you'd have thought somebody was killing an animal of some sort. But didn't you hear anything?"

Neither of them replied.

At the corner of the Pavé des Gardes Jean hesitated.

"Stay to dinner," she whispered imploringly. "Your train has gone; you can take the nine o'clock."

He went into the house with them. What need he fear? Such a scene is not acted twice, and the least he could do was to give her that trifling consolation.

The living-room was warm, the lamp burned brightly, and the sound of their footsteps in the by-path had warned the servant, who was placing the soup on the table.

"Here you are at last!" said Olympe, already seated, her napkin under her short arms. She removed the lid of the soup-tureen, then suddenly paused with an exclamation,—

"*Mon Dieu!* my dear—"

It was Fanny, haggard of face, seemingly ten years older, her eyes swollen and bloodshot, with mud on her dress and even in her hair, the terrified disarray of a prostitute after a chase by the police. She breathed heavily a moment, her poor inflamed eyes blinking in the light; and little by little the warm atmosphere of the little house, the bright and attractive table, evoked memories of the happy days and caused a new outburst of tears, amid which could be distinguished the words:

"He is going to leave me; he is going to be married."

Hettéma, his wife, and the peasant woman who was serving them looked at one another and at Gaussin. "At all events, let us dine," said the fat man, evidently in a passion; and the clashing of greedy spoons mingled with the sound of running water in the adjoining bedroom, where Fanny was sponging her face. When she returned, all blue with powder, in a white woolen *peignoir,* the Hettémas watched her with alarm, expecting some fresh outburst, and were greatly astonished to see her, without a word, attack the food greedily, like a shipwrecked sailor, and fill the hollow dug by her chagrin and the gulf made by her shrieks with whatever was within reach,—bread, cabbage, a wing of the wild duck, potatoes. She ate and ate.

The conversation was somewhat constrained at first, but gradually became more spontaneous; and as the Hettémas talked only upon commonplace, material topics, such as the method of making pancakes digest well with preserves, and

whether hair or feathers were better to sleep on, they arrived safely at the coffee, which the stout couple flavored with a little burned sugar, and sipped slowly with their elbows on the table.

It was a pleasure to see the trustful and placid glance exchanged by those two bulky crib and manger mates. They had no desire to part, not they. Jean surprised that glance, and in that familiar room, filled with souvenirs, with old habits crouching in every corner, the torpor of weariness, of digestion, of bodily comfort stole over him. Fanny, who was watching him closely, had softly approached his chair, rubbed against him, and passed her arm through his.

"Listen," he said suddenly. "Nine o'clock! adieu! I will write to you."

He sprang to his feet and was out-of-doors, across the street, feeling in the darkness for the latch of the gate at the entrance to the lane. Two arms were thrown about his waist: "Kiss me, at least."

He felt that he was enveloped in her dress, that he was impregnated with the perfume, the warmth, of that woman's embrace, intoxicated by that farewell kiss, which left in his mouth the taste of fever and of tears.

And she, feeling that he was weak, murmured, "Just a little while, only a little while."

A signal on the track. It was the train!

How had he the strength to tear himself free, to rush to the station whose lamps gleamed through the leafless branches? He was still overcome with amazement as he sat panting in a corner of the carriage, gazing out through the window at the lighted windows of the little house and a white figure at the gate. "Adieu! adieu!" And that cry banished the speechless dread he had felt at that curve in the track of seeing his mistress in the place she occupied in his dream of death.

Putting out his head, he watched their little summer house recede and grow smaller and rise and fall in the inequalities of the ground, until it was no more than a wandering star. Suddenly he felt a prodigious joy and sense of relief. How freely he breathed, how lovely the whole valley of Meudon was, and those broad black hillsides ending far away in a twinkling triangle of innumerable lights, descending toward the Seine in regular lines! Irène was waiting for him there, and he was flying to her with all the speed of the train, with all his lover's eagerness, with all his impulsive yearning for a new and honorable life.

Paris! He called a cab to be driven to Place Vendôme. But under the gaslight he scrutinized his clothes, his shoes covered with mud, a thick, clogging mud, his whole past which still held him fast by burdensome and degrading bonds. Oh, no! not to-night." And he drove to his old lodging-house on Rue Jacob, where Le Fénat had taken a room for him near his own.

XIII

THE next day Césaire, who had taken upon himself the delicate commission of going to Chaville to get his nephew's books and other property, to consummate the rupture by moving out of the house, returned very late, just as Gaussin was beginning to tire himself out with all sorts of wild and sinister conjectures. At last a cab with a rail around the top, heavy as a hearse, turned the corner of Rue Jacob, loaded with corded boxes and an enormous trunk which he recognized as his own, and his uncle entered, mysterious and heartbroken.

"I took plenty of time, in order to pick up everything at once and not have to go there again." He pointed to the boxes which two porters were placing in different parts of the room. "Your clothes and your linen are in this one, your papers and books there. Nothing is missing but your letters; she begged me to let her keep them, so that she could read them over again, could have something from you. I couldn't see that there was any danger in that. She's such a soft-hearted girl!"

He sat down on the trunk, breathing hard, sponging his forehead with his brown silk handkerchief, as large as a napkin. Jean dared not ask him for details, in what mood he had found her; the other furnished none for fear of making him sad. And they filled that painful silence, pregnant with things unexpressed, by remarks as to the sudden change in the weather, which had grown much colder since the preceding day, as to the depressing aspect of that bare, desert suburb of Paris, planted with factory chimneys, and with enormous cast-iron cylinders, used as storehouses by market-gardeners.

"Did she give you nothing for me, uncle?" Jean asked after a while.

"No; you need have no fear. She won't bother you; she has chosen her course with much determination and dignity."

Why did Jean detect in those few words a suggestion of blame, a rebuke for his harshness?

"I tell you," continued the uncle, "job for job, I prefer La *Mornas's claws* to that unhappy creature's despair."

"Did she cry much?"

"Oh, my dear boy— And so hard, so heartily, that I sobbed myself as I sat opposite her with no strength to—" He blew his nose and shook off his emotion with a shake of the head like an old goat. "However, what can you expect? It isn't your fault; you couldn't pass your whole life there. Things are settled quite as they should be; you leave her some money and her furniture. And now, on with the courting! Try to arrange your marriage in good season. Such affairs are too serious for me. The consul will have to take a hand in it. As for me, I can only deal with left-handed connections." He was suddenly seized by a fresh paroxysm of melancholy, and added, as he stood with his forehead against the window, looking out at the low clouds from which the rain poured down upon the roofs,—

"I tell you, the world is growing dismal; in my day we used to part more cheerfully than this."

When Le Fénat had gone, accompanied by his elevating machine, Jean, deprived of that restless, talkative good-humor, had a long week to pass, an impression of emptiness and solitude, all the dark bewilderment of widowhood. In such cases, even without regret for a vanished passion, you seek for your double, you miss him; for the life together, the sharing of table and bed, create a network of invisible, subtle bonds, whose strength is disclosed only by the effort and the pain of breaking them. The influence of close association and habit is so marvelously penetrating that two persons who live the same life end by resembling each other.

His five years with Sapho had not as yet molded him to that extent; but his body retained the marks of the chain and felt its heavy, dragging weight. And just as it happened on several occasions that his steps turned instinctively toward Chaville when he left his office, so, in the morning, he would feel on the pillow beside him for the heavy masses of black hair, released from their comb, upon which his first kiss was wont to fall.

The evenings especially seemed interminable to him in those furnished lodgings which recalled the early days of their liaison, the presence of another mistress, reserved and silent, whose little card surrounded the mirror with an alcove perfume, and with the mystery of her name: Fanny Legrand. Thereupon he would leave the house and try to tire himself out, to distract his thoughts with the music and glare of some petty theater, until old Bouchereau should give

him the right to pass three evenings a week with his fiancée.

They had reached an understanding at last. Irène loved him, *Uncle* was content; the marriage was to take place early in April, at the end of the course of lectures. They had the three winter months to see each other, to become acquainted with each other, to desire each other, to make the fond and charming paraphrase of the first glance, which binds hearts together, and the first avowal, which causes unrest.

On the evening of his betrothal, Jean, returning home without the slightest inclination for sleep, felt an impulse to arrange his room so as to give it an orderly, hard-working appearance, obeying the natural instinct to make our life correspond with our thoughts. He put his table in place and his books, which he had not as yet unpacked, and which were tossed pell-mell into one of those packing-boxes made in haste, the Code between a pile of handkerchiefs and a gardening jacket. As he was arranging the books, a letter in his mistress's handwriting, with no envelope, fell from between the leaves of a Dictionary of Commercial Law, the book he consulted most frequently.

Fanny had intrusted it to the hazard of his future labors, distrusting the too short-lived emotion of Césaire, and thinking that she would gain her object more surely in that way. He determined not to open it at first, but yielded at the very mild, very reasonable words with which it began, her agitation being evident in the trembling of the pen, the unevenness of the lines. She asked but one favor, a single one, that he would return to her from time to time. She would say nothing, she would reproach him with nothing, neither with his marriage nor with the separation, which she knew to be absolute and final. But if she could only see him!

"Remember that it was a terrible blow to me, and so sudden, so unexpected! I am just as if some one had died, or I had been burned out,—I don't know which way to turn. I weep, I expect you, I gaze at the place where my happiness used to lie. No one but you can accustom me to this new situation. As an act of charity, come and see me, so that I may feel not so entirely alone. I am afraid of myself."

Those lamentations, that imploring summons, ran through the whole letter, with the constantly recurring refrain, *"Come, come."* He could fancy himself in the clearing in *the heart of the* woods, with Fanny at his feet, and that

piteous face raised to his under the pale violet sky of evening, all haggard and soft with tears, that mouth opening in the darkness to cry out. It was that that haunted him all night, and disturbed his sleep, and not the intoxicating bliss he had brought from Place Vendôme. It was that worn, aged face that he constantly saw, despite all his efforts to place between it and him the face with pure outlines, the cheeks like a carnation in flower, which the declaration of love tinged with a little red flush under the eyes.

That letter was dated a week before; for a whole week the unhappy creature had been awaiting a word or a visit, the encouragement she sought in resigning herself to her fate. But how did it happen that she had not written since? Perhaps she was ill; and his former fears returned. He thought that Hettéma might be able to give him news of her, and, relying upon the regularity of his habits, he went and waited for him in front of the Artillery headquarters.

The last stroke of ten was striking at Saint Thomas d'Aquin's when the stout man turned the corner of the little square, with his collar turned up and his pipe between his teeth, and holding the latter with both hands to warm his fingers. Jean watched him approaching in the distance, deeply moved by all the memories that the sight of him recalled; but Hettéma greeted him with a repugnance which he hardly tried to conceal.

"It's you, is it? Perhaps we haven't cursed you this week! —and we went into the country to lead a tranquil life."

As he stood in the doorway, finishing his pipe, he told him that on the preceding Sunday they had asked Fanny to dinner with the child, whose day it was to be at home, hoping to turn her mind from her miserable thoughts. The dinner passed off very cheerfully; she even sang something to them at dessert; then about ten o'clock they separated, and the Hettémas were preparing to go comfortably to bed, when some one suddenly knocked on the shutters, and little Josaph cried in a terrified voice,—

"Come quick; mamma's trying to poison herself!"

Hettéma rushed to the house and arrived in time to take the phial of laudanum from her by force. He had had to fight, to throw his arms around her and hold her, and at the same time defend himself against the blows of her head and her comb, which she aimed at his face. In the struggle, the phial broke, the laudanum was spilled on everything, and there was no harm done beyond the spotting and perfuming of clothes with the poison. "But you can understand that

such scenes, a whole drama of sensational news-items, don't suit peaceful folks like us. So, it's decided, I've given my notice, and next month I move." He replaced his pipe in its case, and with a very affable adieu disappeared under the low arches of a small courtyard, leaving Gaussin thoroughly bewildered by what he had heard.

He pictured to himself the scene in that chamber which had been theirs, the terror of the little one calling for help, the rough struggle with the stout man, and he fancied that he could taste the bitter, sleep-producing flavor of the spilled laudanum. The horror clung to him all day, aggravated by the thought of the isolation that was soon to be her lot. When the Hettémas had gone who would restrain her hand when she made another attempt?

A letter arrived, and comforted him to some extent. Fanny thanked him for not being so hard-hearted as he chose to appear, since he still took some interest in the poor abandoned wretch. "He told you, did he not? I tried to die; it was because I felt so lonely! I tried, but I could not; he stopped me; perhaps my hand trembled,—the fear of suffering, of becoming ugly. Oh, how did that little Doré have the courage? After the first shame of failure, it was a joy to think I could still write to you, love you at a distance, see you again; for I have not lost the hope that you will come once, as one goes to see an unhappy friend in a house of mourning, for pity's sake, simply for pity's sake."

Thereafter there came from Chaville every two or three days letters of varying length, a journal of sorrow which he had not the heart to send back, and which enlarged the sore spot in that tender heart made by a pity without love, no longer for the mistress, but for the fellow-creature suffering because of him.

One day her theme was the departure of her neighbors, those witnesses of her past happiness, who carried away so many souvenirs. All that she had now to remind her of it was the furniture, the walls of their little house, and the servant, poor uncivilized creature, as little interested in anything as the thrush, which huddled sadly in a corner of his cage, shivering with the cold.

Another day, when a pale sunbeam shone through her window, she awoke joyful in the firm conviction, "He will come to-day!" Why? for no reason, just an idea. She at once set about making the house attractive, and herself coquettish in her Sunday dress and with her hair arranged as he liked it; and then she counted the trains from her win-

dow until evening, until the last trace of light had vanished, and listened for his footstep on the Pavé des Gardes. She must be mad!

Sometimes just a line: "It rains; it is dark; I am alone, and I am weeping for you." Or else she would content herself with placing in the envelope a poor little flower, all drenched and stiff with frost, the last flower from their little garden. That little flower, picked from under the snow, conveyed the idea of winter, of solitude and abandonment, better than all her lamentations; he could see the place, at the end of the path, and a woman's skirt brushing against the flower-beds, wet to the hem, sauntering to and fro in a solitary promenade.

The result of this pity, which tore his heart, was that he still lived with Fanny notwithstanding the rupture. His mind was there, he pictured her to himself every hour of the day; but, by a singular freak of his memory, although it was only five or six weeks since their separation, and the most trivial details of their home were still present to his mind, from La Balue's cage, opposite a wooden cuckoo won at a country fair, to the branches of the walnut-tree which tapped at their dressing-room window in the lightest breeze, the woman herself no longer appeared to him distinctly. He saw her in a sort of mist, with a single detail of her face clearly marked and painful to see,—the deformed mouth, the smile punctured by the gap once filled by the missing tooth.

Thus withered and aged, what would become of the poor creature by whose side he had slept so long? When the money he had left her was spent, where would she go, to what depths would she descend? And suddenly there rose before him in his memory the wretched street-walker he had met one night in an English tavern, dying of thirst before her slice of smoked salmon. She whose attentions, whose passionate and faithful affection he had so long accepted, would become like her! And that thought drove him to despair. But what could he do? Because he had had the misfortune to meet that woman, to live some time with her, was he doomed to keep her forever, to sacrifice his happiness to her? Why he, and not the others? In the name of what principle of justice?

Although forbidding himself to see her, he wrote to her; and his letters, purposely matter-of-fact and dry, afforded glimpses of his emotion beneath soothing and prudent counsels. He urged her to take Josaph away from the boarding-

school, to keep him at home with her to divert her thoughts; but Fanny refused. What was the use of inflicting her sorrow, her discouragement, on that child? The little fellow had quite enough of it on Sunday, when he prowled from chair to chair, wandered from the living-room to the garden, conscious that some great misfortune had cast a blight upon the house, and not daring to ask any more questions about "Papa Jean," since she had told him, sobbing, that he had gone away and would not come back.

"All my papas go away, don't they?"

And that remark of the little foundling, repeated in a heartrending letter, weighed heavily on Gaussin's heart. Soon the thought that she was at Chaville became so oppressive to him that he advised her to return to Paris, to see people. With her sad experience of men and separations, Fanny saw in that suggestion simply a shocking egotism, a hope to rid himself of her forever by one of those sudden fancies for which she had been famous; and she stated her views rankly:—

"You know what I said to you long ago. I will remain your wife in spite of everything, your faithful and loving wife. Our little house encompasses me with you, and I would not leave it for anything on earth. What should I do in Paris? I am disgusted with my past, which keeps you away from me; and then just think what temptation you would expose us to! Do you think you are very strong, pray? Then come, bad boy, once, only once."

He did not go; but one Sunday afternoon, when he was alone and working, he heard two little taps at his door. He was startled, recognizing her abrupt way of announcing her presence, as of yore. Fearing to find some order below, she had ascended the stairs at a breath, without asking any questions. He crept to the door, his footsteps muffled in the carpet, and heard her breathe through the crack,—

"Are you there, Jean?"

Oh, that humble, broken voice! Once again, not very loud, "Jean!" then a sighing groan, the rustling of a letter, and the caress and farewell of a kiss thrown through the door.

When she had descended the stairs, slowly, stair by stair, as if expecting to be recalled, then, not before, did Jean pick up the letter and open it. Little Hochecorne had been buried that morning at the Children's Hospital. She had come with the father and some few persons from Chaville, and had been unable to resist going up to see him or

to leave these lines written beforehand. "What did I tell you? If I lived in Paris, I should be on your stairs all the time. Adieu, my dear; I am going back to our home."

As he read, his eyes blurred with tears, he recalled a similar scene on Rue de l'Arcade, the grief of the discarded lover, the letter slipped under the door, and Fanny's heartless laughter. So she loved him better than he loved Irène! Or is it true that man, being more involved than woman in the conflicts of business and of life, has not, like her, the exclusiveness of love, the forgetfulness of and indifference to everything save her one absorbing passion?

That torment, those pangs of pity, were allayed only in Irène's presence. There only did his agony relax, melt away beneath the soft blue rays of her glances. He was conscious of naught save a great weariness, a temptation to lay his head on her shoulder, and to remain there without speaking or moving, under her wing.

"What is the matter?" she would say to him. "Aren't you happy?"

Yes, indeed, very happy. But why did his happiness consist of so much melancholy and weeping? At times he was tempted to tell her everything, as a kind friend who would understand his misery; without considering, poor fool, the unhappiness that such confidences cause in untried hearts, the incurable wounds they may inflict upon the trustfulness of an attachment. Ah! if he could only have carried her away, have fled with her! he felt that that would be the end of his misery; but old Bouchereau would not advance by one hour the appointed time. "I am an old man; I am sick. I shall never see my child again, so don't rob me of these last days."

Beneath his stern exterior that great man was the kindest of men. Doomed irrevocably by the affection of the heart, whose progress he himself followed and noted, he talked about it with marvellous sang-froid, continued his lectures when he could hardly breathe, ausculted patients who were less ill than he. There was but one weak side to that boundless mind, and it was one that betrayed the peasant origin of the native of Touraine: his respect for titles, for the nobility. And the remembrance of the little towers of Castelet and the venerable name of Armandy were not without their influence on his readiness to accept Jean as his niece's husband.

The marriage was to take place at Castelet, in order to *avoid discommoding* the poor mother, who sent every week

to her future daughter an affectionate letter, dictated to Divonne or to one of the little saints of Bethany. And it was a soothing delight to him to talk with Irène about his family, to find Castelet on Place Vendôme, all his affections centered around his dear bethrothed.

But he was dismayed to feel so old, so weary, compared with her, to see her take a childish pleasure in things which no longer amused him, in the every-day joys of life, already discounted by him. For instance, the list that must be prepared of all that they would need to take to the distant consulate, furniture and coverings to be selected; and one evening he paused in the middle of it, with hesitating pen, dismayed to find his mind returning to his installation on Rue d'Amsterdam, and by the thought that he must inevitably begin anew all the pleasures that were exhausted and forever ended for him by those five years with another woman, in a burlesque of marriage and domesticity.

XIV

"Yes, my dear fellow, he died last night in Rosa's arms. I have just taken him to the taxidermist's."

De Potter, the musician, whom Jean met coming out of a shop on Rue du Bac, clung to him with an effusiveness hardly compatible with his features, the stern and impassive features of a man of business, and described to him the martyrdom of poor Bichito, slain by the Parisian winter, shrivelled with cold, despite the wads of cotton-wool, the saucer of spirits of wine that had been kept lighted for two months under his little nest, as for children born before their time. Nothing could keep him from shivering; and the previous night, while they were all about him, one last shudder shook him from head to tail, and he died like a good Christian, thanks to the quantities of holy water which Mamma Pilar poured on his scaly skin, where life vanished in changing hues, in prismatic displays, saying, with uplifted eyes: "God forgive him!"

"I laugh about it, but my heart is heavy all the same; especially when I think of the grief of my poor Rosa, whom I left in tears. Luckily, Fanny was with her."

"Fanny?"

"Yes, we hadn't seen her for ages. She arrived this morning just in the midst of the drama, and the dear girl remained to comfort her friend." Heedless of the effect produced by his words, he added: "So it's all over between you? You aren't together now? Do you remember our conversation on the lake at Enghien? At all events, you profit by the lessons you receive." And a touch of envy could be detected in his approbation.

Gaussin knit his brow, feeling genuinely disgusted at the thought that Fanny had returned to Rosario; but he was angry with himself for such weakness, for, after all, he no longer had any sort of authority over her life or responsibility for it.

De Potter stopped in front of a house on Rue de Beaune, a very old street of the aristocratic Paris of an earlier day, into which they had turned. There it was that he

lived, or was supposed to live, for the purpose of propriety and for the world at large; for in fact he passed his time on Avenue de Villiers or at Enghien, and made only brief visits to the conjugal domicile, so that his wife and child might not seem too entirely abandoned.

Jean was walking on, his mouth already open to say adieu, but the other held his hand in his long, hard keyboard crusher's hands, and, without a trace of embarrassment, like a man to whom his vice is no longer a matter for apology,—

"Pray do me a favor. Come upstairs with me. I was to dine with my wife to-day, but I really cannot leave my poor Rosa all alone with her despair. You will serve as a pretext for my going out and avoid a tiresome explanation."

The musician's study, a superb but cold bourgeois apartment on the second floor, smelt of the solitude of the room in which no work is done. Everything was too clean, without the slightest disorder, with none of the feverish activity which infects objects and furniture. Not a book, not a paper on the table, which was occupied in solitary majesty by a huge bronze inkstand, without ink, and polished as if for exhibition in a shop-window; nor was there a sign of music on the old spinet-shaped piano, by which the early works were inspired. And a bust of white marble, the bust of a young woman with refined features and a sweet expression, pale in the fading light, made the fireless, draped fireplace even colder, and seemed to gaze sadly at the walls covered with beribboned golden wreaths, with medals, with commemorative frames, a glorious, pompous collection generously left to his wife by way of compensation, and cared for by her as the decorations of the tomb of her happiness.

They had hardly entered the study when the door opened again and Madame de Potter appeared.

"Is it you, Gustave?"

She thought that he was alone, and stopped abruptly at sight of the strange face, with evident disquietude. Refined and pretty, fashionably but quietly dressed, she seemed to have more character than her bust, the sweet expression of her face being replaced by a courageous and nervous determination. In society opinions were divided with regard to her. Some blamed her for enduring the advertised contempt of her husband, that second establishment known of all the world; others, on the contrary, admired her silent resignation. And she was generally considered a placid creature, loving her repose above everything, finding suffi

cient compensation for her widowhood in the caresses of a lovely child and the satisfaction of bearing the name of a great man.

But while the musician presented his companion and muttered some falsehood or other to escape the dinner at home, Jean could see by the change that passed over that youthful face, by the fixity of that glance which no longer saw nor listened, as if absorbed by mental suffering, that a terrible sorrow was buried alive beneath that worldly exterior. She seemed to accept the fable, which she did not believe, and simply said in a gentle tone,—

"Raymond will cry; I promised him that we would dine by his bed."

"How is he?" asked De Potter, distraught, impatient.

"Better, but he still coughs. Aren't you coming to see him?"

He muttered something in his mustache, pretending to be looking around the room: "Not now—in a great hurry—appointment at the club at six o'clock." What he was most anxious to avoid was being left alone with her.

"Adieu, then," said the young woman, suddenly subdued, her features resuming their serenity, like a placid pool disturbed to its lowest depths by a stone. She bowed and disappeared.

"Let us be off!"

And De Potter, free once more, left the room, followed by Gaussin, who watched him as he went downstairs in front of him, stiff and correct in his long tight-fitting frock-coat of English cut,—that ill-omened lover, who was so deeply affected when he carried his mistress's chameleon to be stuffed, and left his house without kissing his sick child.

"All this, my dear fellow," said the musician, as if in answer to his friend's thought, "is the fault of those who made me marry. A genuine favor to me and to that poor woman! What an insane idea to try to make a husband and father of me! I was Rosa's lover; I remained so, and I shall remain so until one of us dies. Does a man ever cut loose from a vice that seizes him just at the right moment and holds him fast? Take your own case,—are you sure that if Fanny had chosen——"

He hailed an empty cab which was passing and added, as he stepped in,—

"Apropos of Fanny, do you know the news? Flamant is pardoned; he has left Mazas. It was Déchelette's petition. Poor Déchelette! he did some good even after his death."

Gaussin stood still, with a mad longing to run, to overtake those wheels jolting rapidly down the dark street where the lamps were being lighted, and was astounded to find himself so deeply moved. "Flamant pardoned—left Mazas!" he repeated the words softly, seeing in them an explanation of Fanny's silence for several days, of her lamentations abruptly broken off, hushed under the caresses of a comforter; for the poor devil's first thought, when he was set free, must have been for her.

He remembered the affectionate letters from the prison, his mistress's obstinacy in defending him alone, when she held the others so cheap; and instead of congratulating himself upon a piece of good fortune which logically relieved him of all cause for anxiety, of all remorse, an indefinable heartache kept him awake and excited most of the night. Why? He no longer loved her; but he thought of his letters, still in that woman's hands, which she would read to the other, perhaps, and which—who knows?—she might some day, under an evil influence, make use of to disturb his repose, his happiness.

Whether it was false or genuine, or whether, unknown to him, it concealed a fear of another sort, that anxiety about his letters led him to determine upon an imprudent step, the visit to Chaville which he had always obstinately refused to make. But to whom could he intrust so delicate and confidential a mission? One morning in February he took the ten o'clock train, very calm in mind and heart, with no other fear than that of finding the house closed and the woman already vanished with her felon.

From the curve in the track, the sight of the open blinds and the curtains at the windows of the little house reassured him; and remembering his emotion when he watched the little light receding behind him in the darkness, he laughed at himself and the fickleness of his impressions. He was no longer the same man, and certainly he should not find the same woman. And yet only two months had passed. The woods by which the train sped had taken on no new leaves, retained the same leprous blotches as on the day of the rupture and of her shrieking to the echoes.

He alighted alone at the station in that cold, penetrating fog, took the narrow country road, slippery with the hard snow, passed under the railroad bridge, and met no one before he reached the Pavé des Gardes, where a man and boy appeared at the entrance to the path, followed by a railway porter pushing his truck laden with trunks.

The child, all muffled up in a comforter, his cap pulled over his ears, restrained an exclamation as they passed him.

"Why, it's Josaph!" he said to himself, a little surprised and saddened by the child's ingratitude; and as he turned to look behind him, he met the eyes of the man who was leading the boy by the hand. That clever, intelligent face, blanched by confinement, those second-hand clothes purchased the day before, that light beard close to the chin, not having had time to grow since Mazas—Flamant, *parbleu!* And Josaph was his son!

It was a revelation in a flash of lightning. He saw and understood everything, from the letter in the casket wherein the handsome engraver commended to his mistress's care a child of his in the provinces, down to the little fellow's mysterious arrival and Hettéma's embarrassed manner at any mention of the adoption, and Fanny's significant glances at Olympe; for they were all in the plot to make him support the counterfeiter's son. Oh, what a jolly simpleton he was, and how they must have laughed at him! He felt a shudder of disgust with all that shameful past, a longing to leave it far, far behind him; but certain things disturbed him, which he wished to have cleared up. The man and the child had gone, why not she? And then his letters, he must have his letters, and leave nothing of his in that den of contamination and misery.

"Madame! Here is monsieur!"

"What monsieur?" artlessly inquired a voice from the bedroom.

"It is I."

He heard a little shriek, a hurried movement, then, "Wait, I am getting up; I am coming."

Still in bed, after twelve o'clock! Jean shrewdly suspected the reason; and while he awaited her coming in the living-room, where the slightest objects were familiar to him, the whistle of a locomotive, the quivering bleat of a goat in a neighboring garden, the scattered dishes on the table carried him back to the mornings of other days, the hasty breakfast before he started for Paris.

Fanny came in and ran impulsively toward him, then suddenly checked herself in face of his frigid manner; and they stood for a second, surprised, hesitating, as if two people should meet, after one of these shattered intimacies, on opposite sides of a broken bridge, where the banks are far

apart, and with a vast expanse of turbulent, all-engulfing waves between.

"Good-morning," she said in a low voice, without moving

It seemed to her that he had changed, grown pale. He was amazed to find her so youthful, simply a little heavier, not so tall as he remembered her, but bathed in that peculiar radiance, that brilliancy of the complexion and the eyes, that softness as of a well-kept lawn which followed nights given over to pleasure. So the woman, the memory of whom gnawed his heart with pity, had remained in the woods, in the ravine strewn with dead leaves!

"People rise late in the country," he observed satirically.

She apologized for herself, talked about a sick headache, and, like him, used the impersonal forms of the verb, uncertain how to address him; then she said, in answer to the unspoken question conveyed by a glance at the remains of the breakfast, "It was the child; he breakfasted here this morning before going away."

"Going away? Where has he gone, pray?"

He affected supreme indifference with his lips, but the gleam in his eyes betrayed him.

"The father has reappeared," said Fanny; "he came and took him away."

"On his discharge from Mazas, eh?"

She was startled, but did not try to lie.

"Well, yes. I promised to do it; I did it. How many times I longed to tell you, but I dared not; I was afraid that you would turn him out, poor little fellow." And she added timidly, "You were so jealous!"

He laughed aloud in disdain. He jealous, and of that convict! Nonsense! And feeling that his wrath was rising, he cut himself short, and told her hurriedly why he had come. His letters! Why had she not given them to Césaire? That would have avoided an interview painful to them both.

"True," she said, still very gently, "but I will give them to you; they are in here."

He followed her into the bedroom, noticed the tumbled bed, the clothes hastily thrown over both pillows, inhaled the odor of cigarette smoke mingled with the perfumes of a woman's toilet, which he recognized, as he did the little mother-of-pearl casket on the table. And as the same thought came to both their minds, she said, opening the box: "There aren't very many of them; we shouldn't run any risk by putting them in the fire."

He said nothing, sorely perturbed, his mouth parched, hesitating to approach the rumpled bed, where she was turning over the letters for the last time, her head bent, the neck firm and white beneath the raised coils of her hair, and her figure, unconfined in the lose woollen garment she wore, yielding and flexible and somewhat ampler than of yore.

"There! They are all there."

Having taken the package and thrust it absently into his pocket, for the current of his thoughts had changed, Jean rejoined,—

"So he is taking his child away? Where are they going?"

"To Morvan, in his province, to hide himself and work at his engraving, which he will send to Paris under a false name."

"And you? Do you expect to remain here?"

She turned her eyes away to avoid his glance, stammering that it would be very dismal. So that she thought—perhaps she might go away soon—a short journey.

"To Morvan, of course? To keep house for him!" Thereupon he gave free rein to his jealous rage: "Why don't you say at once that you're going to join your thief, that you're going to live with him? You've wanted to do it long enough. Good! Go back to your kennel. Strumpet and counterfeiter go well together; I was very good to try and drag you out of that mire."

She maintained her mute immobility, a gleam of triumph stealing between her lowered lashes. And the more fiercely he stung her with his savage, insulting irony, the prouder she seemed, and the quiver at the corners of her mouth became more marked. Now he was talking about his happiness, about virtuous, youthful love, the only true love. Ah! what a soft pillow to lie upon was a virtuous woman's heart! Then, suddenly lowering his voice, as if he were ashamed,—

"I just met your Flamant; did he pass the night here?"

"Yes, it was late and snowing. I made up a bed for him on the couch."

"You lie! he slept there; one has only to use his eyes!"

"And what then?" she put her face close to his, her great gray eyes lighted with a lustful flame. "Did I know that you would come? And when I had lost you, what *did I care for all* the rest! I was alone, depressed, dis*gusted.*"

"And then the bouquet of the galleys! After living so long with an honest man! How you must have revelled in his society! Ah, you filthy creature! take this!"

She saw the blow coming without a movement to avoid it, received it full in the face, then, with a dull roar of pain, of joy, of victory, she leaped upon him and threw her arms about him.

"*M'ami, m'ami,* you love me still!"

An express train rushing by with a great uproar aroused him with a start toward evening; and he lay for some moments with his eyes open, unable to identify himself, alone in the depths of that great bed. Much snow had fallen during the afternoon. In a silence as profound as that of the desert, he could hear it melting, running down the walls and the windows, dripping in the gutters on the roof, and, now and then, sputtering on the coke fire on the hearth.

Where was he? What was he doing there? Gradually, in the light reflected from the little garden, the room appeared before him, all white, lighted from below, with Fanny's great portrait hanging opposite him; and he recalled the circumstances of his downfall without the slightest astonishment. Immediately on entering that room, standing by that bed, he had felt that he was recaptured, lost; old associations drew him on like a yawning chasm, and he said to himself, "If I fall now, it will be irrevocably and forever." It was done; and beneath the feeling of melancholy and disgust at his cowardice, there was a sort of relief in the thought that he would never again emerge from that mire, the pitiable satisfaction of the wounded man who, while the blood gushes from his wound, throws himself upon a dung-hill to die, and, weary of suffering, of struggling, all his veins being open, buries himself blissfully in the soft and fetid warmth.

What remained for him to do now was ghastly but very simple. Could he return to Irène after such treachery, and run the risk of a household *à la de Potter?* Low as he had fallen, he had not yet reached that point. He would write to Bouchereau, the great physiologist who was the first to study and describe diseases of the will, and lay before him a horrible case, the story of his life from his first meeting with that woman, when she had laid her hand upon his arm, down to the day when, believing that he was saved, in the *midst of his happiness,* of his intoxicating bliss, she seized *him again by* the magic of the past, that horrible past in

which love occupied so small a place, simply cowardly habit and the vice that had entered into his bones.

The door opened. Fanny stole softly into the room in order not to waken him. Between his lowered eyelids he watched her, active and strong, rejuvenated, standing at the fire warming her feet, which were wet through with the snow in the garden, and from time to time turning to look at him with the little smile her face had worn in the morning during the quarrel. She took the package of Maryland, which was in its usual place, rolled a cigarette and was going out, but he called her back.

"Aren't you asleep?"

"No. Sit down here and let us talk."

She sat on the edge of the bed, a little surprised by his gravity.

"Fanny, we must go away."

She thought at first that he was joking, to test her. But the very precise details that he gave her soon undeceived her. There was a vacant post, that at Arica; he would ask for it. It was a matter of a fortnight, just time enough to get their trunks ready.

"And your marriage?"

"Not another word on that subject. What I have done is irreparable. I see plainly enough that that is all over; I cannot tear myself away from you."

"Poor *bébé!*" she said, with melancholy gentleness, not unmixed with contempt. Then, after two or three puffs,—

"Is this place you speak of very far away?"

"Arica? very far, in Peru. Flamant won't be able to join you there," he added in a whisper.

She sat thoughtful and mysterious in her cloud of tobacco smoke. He still held her hand, patted her bare arm, and, lulled by the dripping of the water all about the house, he closed his eyes and sank gently into the mire.

XV

NERVOUS, quivering, with steam up, already under way in fancy like all those who are preparing for departure, Gaussin has been two days at Marseilles, where Fanny is to join him and sail with him. Everything is ready, the staterooms taken, two in the first cabin for the vice-consul at Arica travelling with his sister-in-law; and here he is pacing up and down the worn floor of his hotel chamber, in the twofold feverish expectation of his mistress and the time for sailing.

He must needs walk and work off his excitement where he is, as he dares not go out. The street embarrasses him like a criminal, a deserter,—the bustling, swarming Marseilles street, where, at every corner, it seems to him that his father or old Bouchereau will appear, lay their hands on his shoulder, to recapture him and take him back.

He keeps himself in seclusion and eats in his room, not even going down to the *table d'hôte,* reads without fixing his eyes on the page, throws himself on his bed, diverting his vague siestas with the *Shipwreck of La Perouse* and the *Death of Captain Cook,* which adorn the wall, covered with fly-specks, and leans for hours at a time on the rotten wooden balcony, sheltered by a yellow shade as profusely patched as the sail of a fishing boat.

His hotel, the "Hôtel du Jeune Anacharsis,"—the name, which he chanced to see in Le Bottin, tempted him when he appointed a rendezvous with Fanny,—was an old inn, by no means luxurious, not even very clean, but looking on the harbor with an odor of the sea and of travel. Under his windows, parrots, cockatoos, canaries, with their sweet interminable chirping, the whole open-air display of a dealer in birds, whose cages, piled one upon another, salute the dawn with the murmurs of a virgin forest, overshadowed and drowned as the day advances by the noisy labors of the port, regulated by the great bell of Notre-Dame de la Garde.

There is a confusion of oaths in all tongues, of the cries of boatmen and porters and dealers in shells, between the

blows of the hammer in the refitting docks, the groaning of the cranes, the sonorous blows of the arms of the great levers on the pavement, ship's bells, whistles, the rhythmic music of pumps and capstans, water pouring from holes, escaping steam,—all this uproar, increased twofold and repeated by the echoing surface of the sea near at hand, from which at intervals arises the hoarse roar, the marine monster's breath of a great transatlantic liner steaming out to sea.

And the odors, too, evoke distant countries, wharves on which the sun beats down more fiercely than on this; the cargoes of sandal-wood and logwood being discharged, the lemons, oranges, pistachio nuts, figs, whose penetrating odor ascends in clouds of exotic dust in an atmosphere saturated with brackish water, burned herbs, and the greasy smoke of the *Cookhouses.*

At nightfall these noises diminish, these dense substances in the air fall to the ground and evaporate; and while Jean, reassured by the darkness, raises his shade and looks down upon the black sleeping harbor, beneath the interlacing network of masts and yards and bowsprits, when the silence is broken only by the splashing of an oar or the distant barking of a ship's dog, out at sea, far out at sea, the revolving light of Planier casts a long red or white flame which rends the darkness, shows in the twinkling of an eye the shadows of islands, forts and cliffs. And that luminous glance, guiding myriads of lives over the waves, likewise suggests travel, invites him and beckons to him, summons him in the voice of the wind, the long swell of the open sea, and the hoarse clamor of a steamboat always gasping and blowing somewhere in the roadstead.

Twenty-four hours more to wait; Fanny is not to join him until Sunday. Those three days of waiting at the rendezvous he expected to pass with his family, to devote them to the loved ones whom he will not see again for several years, whom he will never see again, perhaps; but on the evening of his arrival at Castelet, when his father learned that the marriage was broken off and guessed the reason, a violent, terrible explanation had taken place.

What manner of creatures are we, in God's name, what are our tenderest affections, the affections nearest our heart, that a fit of passion between two persons of the same flesh and blood should twist and tear out and carry away the natural sentiments, whose roots are so deep and strong,

with the blind irresistible violence of one of those typhoons of the China seas which the bravest sailors do not dare to remember, but say, with pallid cheeks, "Let us not talk about that."

He will never talk about it, but he will remember all his life that terrible scene on the terrace at Castelet where his happy childhood was passed, facing that placid, beautiful landscape, those pines, those myrtles, those cypresses, which stood quivering in serried ranks around the paternal curse. He will always have before his eyes that tall old man, with his trembling, convulsed features, striding toward him with that expression of hatred about his mouth, with that look of hatred in his eyes, uttering the words one does not forgive, driving him from the house and from the ranks of men of honor: "Begone! go with your harlot; you are dead to us!" And the little twins, crying and dragging themselves on their knees to the door, imploring forgiveness for the big brother, and Divonne's pale face, without a glance, without a farewell word, while, at the window above, the invalid's sweet, anxious face asked the explanation of all that noise, and why her Jean went away so hurriedly and without kissing her.

The thought that he had not kissed his mother made him turn back half-way to Avignon; he left Césaire with the carriage on the outskirts of the farm, took the cross-road, and entered Castelet by the vineyard like a thief. It was a dark night; his feet sank in the dead vines, and he actually ended by being unable to tell where he was, seeking his house in the darkness, already a stranger at home. The vague reflection of the rough-cast walls guided him at last; but the door was fastened, and there was no light in any window. Should he ring or call? He dared not, through fear of his father. He walked around the house two or three times, hoping to make his way in through some insecurely fastened shutter. But Divonne's lantern had gone the rounds, as it did every evening; and after gazing long at his mother's chamber and bidding farewell with all his heart to the home of his childhood, which, too, repulsed him, he fled at last in despair, with a burden of remorse which gave him no rest.

Ordinarily, when young men set out for a prolonged absence, on voyages subjected to the dangerous hazards of the *sea and the wind*, their relatives and friends prolong their *leave-takings* until the final embarkation; they pass the last

day together, they inspect the boat and the traveller's stateroom, in order to follow him the better on his journey. Several times each day Jean sees such affectionate escorts pass his hotel, sometimes numerous and noisy; but he is especially touched by a family party on the floor below him. An old man and an old woman, country people in comfortable circumstances, in broadcloth coat and yellow Cambrai linen dress, have come to see their son off, to be with him until the sailing of the packet; and he can see them, all three, leaning out of their window, idling away the hours of waiting, holding one another's arms, the sailor in the middle, very close together. They do not speak; they embrace.

As Jean watches them, he thinks what a happy departure he might have had. His father, his little sisters, and, resting her soft trembling hand on his arm, she whose eager mind and adventurous soul all the white sails in the offing would irresistibly attract. Vain regrets! The crime is consummated; his destiny is on the rails; he has only to go away and to forget.

How slow and cruel the hours of the last night seemed to him! He tossed and turned in his hard hotel bed, watched for the daylight to appear on the windows, with the gradual shading from black to gray, followed by the whiteness of dawn, which the lighthouse still punctured with a red spark, soon extinguished by the rising sun.

Not until then did he fall asleep; and he was abruptly awakened by a flood of light streaming into his room, by the confused cries from the bird-dealer's cages blending with the innumerable chimes of Sunday in Marseilles echoing over the empty wharves, where all the engines are at rest and flags flying at the mastheads. Ten o'clock already! and the express from Paris arrives at noon. He dresses in haste to go and meet his mistress; they will breakfast looking out upon the sea, then they will carry the luggage on board, and at five o'clock the signal for departure.

A wonderfully lovely day, a deep blue sky with sea-gulls flying hither and thither like white specks, the sea of a still deeper, mineral blue, whereon sails, smoke, everything is visible,—everything glistens and dances; and, like the natural outpouring of those sunlit banks encompassed by the transparent atmosphere and water, harps are playing beneath the hotel windows, an Italian air, divinely sweet, but with a dragging movement of the fingers across the chords that excites the nerves painfully. It is more than music, it is

a winged translation of the joyous humor of the South, the plentitude of life and love swollen even to tears. And the memory of Irène steals into the melody, quivering and weeping. How far away it is! What a fair, lost country, what never-ending regret for opportunities vanished beyond recall!

Let us be off!

On the threshold, as he is going out, Jean meets a waiter: "A letter for Monsieur le Consul. It arrived this morning, but Monsieur le Consul was so sound asleep!" Travellers of distinction are rare at the Hôtel du Jeune Anacharsis, so the worthy Marseillais parade the title of their guest at every opportunity. Who can have written to him? No one knows his address except Fanny. And as he looks more closely at the envelope, he shudders, he understands.

"No, I will not go! it is too great a piece of folly, to which I do not feel equal. For such undertakings, my poor fellow, one must have youth, which I no longer have, or a blind, mad passion, which neither of us has. Five years ago, in the happy days, at a sign from you, I would have followed you to the ends of the earth, for you cannot deny that I loved you passionately. I gave you all I had; and when it was necessary to tear myself away from you I suffered as I never suffered for any man. But such a love exhausts one, you see. To feel that you were so handsome, so young, to be always trembling because of having so many things to defend! Now I can do no more; you have made my life too hard, have made me suffer too much, and I am at the end of my strength.

"Under these conditions the prospects of that long journey, of changing my whole life, terrifies me. Just think how fond I am of keeping still, and that I have never been farther than Saint-Germain! And then women grow old too quickly in the sun, and before you are thirty I shall be as yellow and wrinkled as Mamma Pilar; then is the time that you would be angry with me for your sacrifice, and poor Fanny would pay for everybody else's sins. Do you know, there is a country in the East—I read about it in one of your numbers of *Le Tour du Monde*—where, when a woman deceives her husband, they fasten her alive to a cat and put them in the reeking skin of a beast just flayed, then toss the bag on the beach, howling and plunging about in the hot sun. The woman screeches, the cat scratches, while the skin dries up and contracts around that horrible struggle be-

tween prisoners, until the last death-rattle, the last convulsive movement of the bag. That is the sort of torture that would be in store for us if we were together."

He paused a moment, crushed, stupefied. As far as he could see, the blue waves sparkled in the sun. *Addio!* sang the harps, reinforced by a voice as ardent and passionate as they. *Addio!* And the utter nothingness of his shipwrecked, ruined life, all débris and tears, appeared before him, the field mown, the crops harvested beyond recall, and all for that woman who was slipping from his grasp!

"I ought to have told you this sooner, but I dared not, seeing that you were so worked up, so determined. Your excitement influenced me; and then my woman's vanity, my very natural pride in having won you back after the rupture. But, deep down in my heart, I felt that I was no longer equal to it, that something had broken and it was all over. What can you expect? after such paroxysms! And do not imagine that it is on account of poor Flamant. For him, as for you and everybody else, it is all over, my heart is dead; but there is that child, whom I cannot do without, and who leads me back to his father, poor man, who ruined himself for love of me, and came back to me from Mazas as ardent and loving as at our first meeting. Just fancy that when we met again, he passed the whole night weeping on my shoulder; so you see there was no reason for you to lose your head about him.

"As I have told you, my dear child, I have loved too much; I am worn out. At the present time, I need to have some one love me, coddle me, admire me, and rock me to sleep. Flamant will be at my feet and will never see any wrinkles or gray hairs; and if he marries me, as he intends to do, I shall be doing him a favor. Compare. Above all things, no nonsense. I have taken precautions to prevent your finding me. From the little railway café where I am writing to you, I can see through the trees the house where we passed such happy and such painful moments, and the sign flapping against the door, awaiting new tenants. You are free; you will never hear of me again. Adieu! one kiss, the last, in your neck—*m'ami.*"

THE END

MANON LESCAUT

INTRODUCTION

NOTWITHSTANDING the experience of centuries, which has proved that woman is, without exception, incapable of any true artistic or scientific work, female doctors and politicians are being forced upon us in the present day.

The attempt is useless, since we have not yet produced the female artist or musician, notwithstanding all the desperate efforts of the daughters of "concierges" and of all the marriageable young ladies in general who study the piano, and even composition, with a perseverance worthy of greater success; or who make a mess with oils or water-colors; who copy from plaster models or even from the nude; without being able to paint anything but fans, flowers, plates, or very indifferent portraits.

Woman on earth has two parts to play, quite distinct *rôles*, but both of them charming,—Love and Maternity!

Our admirable masters, the Greeks (who had wiser and clearer ideas of life than we may, at the present day, believe), perfectly understood the two-fold mission of the companion of man. Those women who had to give them children were carefullv selected: they were healthy and strong, were kept indoors, and entirely occupied by their sacred duty; in the holy and natural business of child-bearing, and bringing up their boys who were to become men, —Greeks,—and their girls who were to become mothers!

Those who were destined for Love,—who were to make the hours of repose charming, seductive and tender,—lived free in an atmosphere of homage and gallantry. These were the grand ladies, whose business consisted in making themselves beautiful and delightful,—to ravish the eyes, to captivate the souls, and to trouble the hearts of men.

Nothing was demanded of them but to please; to employ all their address and artifice to learn, and to practice, the subtle and mysterious arts of seductiveness and caressing!

So greatly was their beauty appreciated that a ship was sent to fetch Hippocrates because one of them was with child!

Great men, artists, philosophers, generals, lived in the *houses of these* women, listened to their counsels, found in

the intimacy with them that delicate grace which women possess, and sought in their love something almost divine,—the sensuous and poetic "intoxication" which emanated from their lips and from their eyes.

To woman, in fact, it has been given to dominate and enchant man merely by the form of her body, her smile and the power of her glance. Her irresistible domination escapes from her, surrounds us, and subdues us, without our being able to resist or to struggle against it, when she belongs to the great tempters of the race.

Some of them predominate the history of the world, diffusing over their times a poetic and disquieting charm. But if we bow from afar to the vanished grace of those who have lived, if we are almost in love with them still after the lapse of ages, as Victor Cousin was with Madame de Longueville, how much more do those dreamed of and created by the poets move our passions!

In past days those adorable beings, who so move us even at this distance, were named Cleopatra, Aspasia, Phryne, Ninon de Lenclos, Marion Delorme, Madame de Pompadour, and so on.

And when we think of the charming dead: of those of ancient history clothed in flowing robes,—of those of the middle ages "coiffée du grand hennin" whom Michelet shows us, of those who made the courts of our kings so delightful; we are constrained to murmur the sweet sad ballade[1] of Villon:

Dictes moy où, n'en quel pays
  Est Flora, la belle Romaine;
Archipiada, ne Thaïs,
  Que fut sa cousine germaine;
Echo, parlant, quand bruyt on maine
  Dessus rivière ou sus estan
Qui beaulté ot trop plus qu' humaine?
  Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?

Où est la très sage Helloïs,
  Pour qui fut chastri et puis moyne
Pirre Esbaillart à Saint-Denis?
  Pour son amour ot cest essoyne.
Semblablement, où est le royne

[1] *Ballade des Dames du Temps Jadis*. The English version, *given on the next* page, is by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and is *known as the* "Ballad of Dead Ladies."

Qui commanda que Buridan
  Fust gecté, en ung sac, en Saine?
    Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?

La royne Blanche, comme lis,
  Qui chantoit à voix de seraine;
Berte au grant pié, Bietris, Allis;
  Haremburgis qui tint le Maine,
Et Iehanne, la bonne Lorraine,
  Qu' Englois brulerent à Rouan;
Où sont elles, Vierge souveraine?
  Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?

ENVOI.

Prince, n'enquerez de sepmaine
  Où elles sont, ne de cest an,
Que ce refrain ne vous remaine;
  Mais où sont les neiges d'antan.

Translation:

Tell me now in what hidden way is
  Lady Flora the lovely Roman?
Where's Hipparchia, and where is Thaïs,
  Neither of them the fairer woman?
Where is Echo, beheld of no man,
  Only heard on river and mere—
She whose beauty was more than human?
  But where are the snows of yester-year?

Where's Héloise, the learned nun,
  For whose sake Abeilard, I ween,
Lost manhood and put priesthood on?
  (From love he won such dule and teen!)
And where, I pray you, is the Queen
  Who willed that Buridan should steer,
Sewed in a sack's mouth, down the Seine?
  But where are the snows of yester-year?

White Queen Blanche, like a queen of lilies,
  With a voice like any mermaiden—
Bertha Broadfoot, Beatrice, Alice,
  And Ermengarde, the lady of Maine—
And that good Joan whom Englishmen

At Rouen doomed and burned her there—
Mother of God, where are they then?
But where are the snows of yester-year?

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,
Where they are gone, nor yet this year,
Save with thus much for an over word—
But where are the snows of yester-year?

But if the history of nations is embellished by some figures of women who scintillate like stars, the history of human thought, of artistic thought is illumined also by some feminine creations of writers, some designed by painters or modelled by sculptors.

The body of the Venus of Milo, the head of the Joconda, the face of Manon Lescaut, haunt and move our souls, live ever in the hearts of men, and always trouble all artists, all poets, all those who desire and pursue a veiled and intangible form.

Writers have left to us only three or four of these gracious types who appear known to us, who live in our memories, and almost as realities.

The first is Dido, the woman who loves in the maturity of her age with all the ardor of her blood, all the violence of her desires, all the fever of her caresses. She is sensual, passionate, enthusiastic, with a mouth on which tremble kisses, which bite sometimes, with arms always open to embrace,—bold eyes which demand the contact, the flame of which is immodest.

There is Juliet, the young girl in whose bosom love awakens,—love already burning, chaste still,—which bruises and kills!

There is Virginia, more candid, more *naïve,* divinely pure, in the green island yonder. She dreams, she weeps, she never evokes any sensual desire.—She is the virgin and martyr of poetic love.

Then here is Manon Lescaut. More truly feminine than all the others, frankly *rouée;* perfidious, loving; distracting, *spirituelle,* formidable and charming.

In this figure, so full of seductiveness and instinctive perfidy, the writer seems to have embodied all that is most pleasing, the most tempting, and the most infamous, of the creature woman! Manon is completely, entirely woman, *as she always has* been; as she is and as she will always *be!*

Nor do we find in her the Eve of "Paradise Lost," the eternal, cunning *naïve* temptress who never distinguishes good from ill, and draws away by the mere power of her mouth and her eyes the men weak and strong,—the "eternal man!"

Adam, according to the Scripture, ate the apple which his companion first presented to him. Des Grieux, as soon as he met this irresistible girl, became, without knowing it, without understanding why, by the simple contagion of a feminine soul, by the mere contact with the depraved nature of Manon, a cheat, a blackguard, the almost conscienceless partner of a charming, conscienceless *gredine*.

Did he know what he was doing? No. The caress of this woman had affected his eyes, and engulfed his soul. He knew it so little, he proceeded with so much sincerity, that we ourselves do not feel the candid infamy of his actions, —we, like him, submit to the fascinating graces of Manon, —we love her as he did, we shall be deceived perhaps like him!

We understand it,—we are not more indignant than with another—we almost absolve the man,—we pardon him, because of her, because we, too, feel weak in the presence of this ravishing form, before this unique evocation of the creature of Love.

It is strange to see the complete indulgence extended by the reader in face of the disgraceful conduct of the Chevalier Des Grieux, and his perfidious mistress.

No artistic creation has ever appealed more strongly to men's senses than this exquisite jade, whose subtle and malign charm seems to emanate from her like an indefinable perfume through all the pages of this extraordinary book,—from each phrase, from each word that she utters!

And nevertheless this wretch is sincere; sincere in her deception and frank in her infamy. Des Grieux points this out himself in some lines which show us more of the woman than most of the great "romances" having pretensions to psychology. Never had a girl less fondness for money, but she could not rest a moment in the fear of wanting it. She would never have wanted to touch a *sou* if she could have amused herself without expending it. She did not even inform herself what was the extent of her wealth. But it was such a necessity for her to occupy herself in pleasure that she had not the smallest fund to draw upon except her honor and her inclinations!

How many women are reflected down to the very bottom *of their hearts by* these short sentences!

But her brother, who calculates and schemes, has found out a financier whom he puts in relation with his sister. She gladly accepts the fortune which thus falls to her, and writes to Des Grieux in all sincerity, with all the "ingenuous infamy" of her soul: "I work to make 'mon Chevalier' rich and happy." It is animal love,—animal in its low instincts devoid of all delicacy, or rather of all modesty, of feeling. She loves nevertheless, she loves her "Chevalier," but in what a strange conscienceless fashion! As she finds luxury, wealth, and all worldly good in the house and in the tenderness of another, she fears that Des Grieux is bored, and she sends him a young girl to amuse him;—a "filette de baiser, facile;" and then she is greatly surprised that he does not want this girl;—she has never understood the deep love of the man! "It was in all sincerity," she says, "that I hoped the girl would serve to amuse you, sometimes; for the fidelity I desire from you is that of the heart!"

And when the Chevalier, desperate now, follows the cart which bears away his mistress, she is quite unable to understand the unseen power that binds this miserable man to her; to her who found it so easy to abandon him in his hours of poverty,—she to whom money and love were in reality one and the same thing.

It is by these subtle yet profoundly human traits that the Abbé Prévost has made of Manon Lescaut an inmitable creation. This changeful girl, complex, variable, sincere, odious, and adorable, full of inexplicable sensations, incomprehensible sentiments, of whimsical calculation and of criminal frankness, is she not admirably true to nature? How she differs from the models of vice or virtue presented to us, without complications, by sentimental romancists who imagine invariable types without understanding what a many-sided being "man" is!

But if we would know the moral, let us again look at this Manon with our eyes, as if we had actually met her, and loved her. We perceive the clear cunning look which seems always smiling and promising, which causes to pass before us plain and troublous images: we know the lively, false mouth; the small teeth within the tempting lips; the fine well-penciled brows; the vivacious and coaxing movements of the head; the charming motion of the figure; and the fresh fragrance of the youthful body beneath the toilet redolent of perfume!

No woman has ever been evoked so clearly, so completely *as she: no woman* has ever been so womanly—nor ever has

contained the quintessence of her sex as this famous person, so sweet,—and so perfidious.

And to speak of schools of literature, is it not curious and instructive to notice how this book has survived, and will continue to live, by the mere force of the sincerity and the startling truthfulness to nature of the characters it depicts?

What a number of other remances of the same epoch have disappeared! All that the ingenious writers invented to amuse their contemporaries have been consigned to oblivion. We scarcely know the titles of the most celebrated, and we cannot recall their subjects. Only this realistic novel, so true that it undoubtedly indicates to us the condition of some natures at this very time amongst the French; so ingenuous that one does not trouble oneself concerning the duplicity of the actions described; this book alone remains as a masterpiece, one of those works which form part of the history of a people!

Is there not in this a startling warning, more powerful than all theories and arguments, for those who have chosen the strange profession of writing "on white paper" the adventures they invent!

GUY DE MAUPASSANT.

NOTES BY THE AUTHOR

Although I might have included in my "Memoirs" the adventures of the Chevalier Des Grieux, it seemed to me that there being no direct connection between them, the reader would find greater satisfaction in seeing them separately. A story of such a length would have too long interrupted the thread of my own narrative. Far as I am from assuming the character of an exact writer, I am not ignorant of the axiom that a narrative should be free from all that may render it heavy and irksome, as Horace says:

"Ut jam nunc dicat, jam nunc debentia dici,
Pleraque differat, et præsens in tempus omittat."

But there is no necessity to go to so grave an authority to prove such a simple truth, for good sense is the mainspring of this rule.

If the public have found something interesting and agreeable in the history of my life, I venture to promise that they will be not less satisfied with this addition to it. Readers will see in the conduct of M. Des Grieux a terrible example of the strength of the passions. I have depicted a blind young man who refuses to be happy, who precipitates himself voluntarily into dire misfortune; who with all his meritorious qualities, chooses an obscure and vagabond existence to all the advantages which fortune and nature can give; who sees evils without wishing to avoid them; who suffers from them, but also is overwhelmed by them without taking advantage of the remedies which are continually offered to him; who could at any moment put an end to his troubles. In fine, a contradictory character; a mixture of virtue and vice; a continual contrast of good sentiments with evil actions. Such is the groundwork of my picture. People possessed of good sense will not regard a work of this kind as useless. Beyond the pleasure of an agreeable book, the reader will find few incidents which will not serve to instruct him, and in my opinion it is to render the public a service to amuse and instruct them at the same time.

One cannot reflect upon the precepts of morality without being astonished by seeing them at once so highly estimated and neglected, and one inquires the reason of this capriciousness of the human mind, which enjoys the good and noble ideas from which, in its practice, it is so far removed. If people of a certain order of mind and breeding wish to find out the most common subjects of their conversation, or even of their solitary reveries, it will be easy to remark that they turn almost always upon some moral considerations. The most pleasant minutes of their lives are those which are passed either alone or with a friend, in considering "with open hearts" the charms of virtue, the sweetness of friendship, the means to arrive at happiness, the weaknesses of our nature which keep us at a distance from it, and the remedies which will prevent their growth. Horace and Boileau notice this interchange of thought as one of the most beautiful traits of which they compose the image of a happy life. How then does it happen that one falls so easily from one's high aspirations, and that we find ourselves so quickly on the common level of humanity? I am mistaken if the reason which I shall adduce does not explain this contradiction of our ideas by our practice,—it is this: precepts of morality being only vague and general principles, it is very difficult to make particular application of them to the details of manners and actions.

Let us take an example. The well-born friends feel that gentleness and human conduct are estimable virtues, and they are led to practice them; but at the moment when about to exercise them they remain suspended. Is it really the fitting occasion? Are they quite certain how far they ought to go? Are they not mistaken in the object of their philanthropy? A hundred difficulties arise. They fear to be duped when wishing to be charitable and liberal; to seem only weak when wishing to be tender-hearted and sympathetic,—in a word, of exceeding or not fulfilling the duties which are wrapped up too obscurely in the general notions of charity and kindness. In this uncertainty it is only experience or example which can reasonably determine the bent of the heart. Now experience is not in every one's power to give,—it depends upon the circumstances in which an individual is placed. We must then fall back upon example to regulate our acts in the exercise of virtue.

It is precisely to this class of readers that works of the *kind we now present* are most useful,—such at least as are *written by persons of* honor and good sense. Each fact

which one recalls is a ray of light, instruction which supplies the deficiency in experience. Each adventure is a model on which a person can form himself,—it only wants to be adapted to the circumstances in which one may be placed. The whole work is a moral treatise reduced agreeably to practice.

A severe reader will perhaps be offended to perceive that I have taken up the pen again at my age to write the adventures of Fortune and of Love; but if the reflections I have uttered be sound, they will justify me; if false, my error will be my excuse.

MANON LESCAUT

CHAPTER I

"Why did he love her? Curious fool, be still!
Is human love the fruit of human will?"—BYRON.

JUST about six months before my departure for Spain, I first met the Chevalier des Grieux. Though I rarely quitted my retreat, still the interest I felt in my child's welfare induced me occasionally to undertake short journeys, which, however, I took good care to abridge as much as possible.

I was one day returning from Rouen, where I had been, at her request, to attend a cause then pending before the Parliament of Normandy, respecting an inheritance to which I had claims derived from my maternal grandfather. Having taken the road by Evreux, where I slept the first night, I on the following day, about dinner-time, reached Passy, a distance of five or six leagues. I was amazed, on entering this quiet town, to see all the inhabitants in commotion. They were pouring from their houses in crowds, towards the gate of a small inn, immediately before which two covered vans were drawn up. Their horses still in harness, and reeking from fatigue and heat, showed that the cortège had only just arrived. I stopped for a moment to learn the cause of the tumult, but could gain little information from the curious mob as they rushed by, heedless of my inquiries, and hastening impatiently towards the inn in the utmost confusion. At length an archer of the civic guard, wearing his bandolier, and carrying a carbine on his shoulder, appeared at the gate; so, beckoning him towards me, I begged to know the cause of the uproar. Nothing, sir, said he, but a dozen of the frail sisterhood, that I and my comrades are conducting to Havre-de-Grace, whence we are to ship them for America. There are one or two of them pretty enough; and it is that, apparently, which attracts the curiosity of these good people.

I should have passed on, satisfied with this explanation, if my attention had not been arrested by the cries of an old woman, who was coming out of the inn with her hands clasped, and exclaiming: A downright barbarity!—A scene to excite horror and compassion! What may this mean? I inquired. Oh! sir; go into the house yourself, said the woman, and see if it is not a sight to rend your heart! Curiosity made me dismount; and leaving my horse to the care of the ostler, I made my way with some difficulty through the crowd, and did indeed behold a scene sufficiently touching.

Among the twelve girls, who were chained together by the waist in two rows, there was one, whose whole air and figure seemed so ill-suited to her present condition, that under other circumstances I should not have hesitated to pronounce her a person of high birth. Her excessive grief, and even the wretchedness of her attire, detracted so little from her surpassing beauty, that at first sight of her I was inspired with a mingled feeling of respect and pity. She tried, as well as the chain would permit her, to turn herself away, and hide her face from the rude gaze of the spectators. There was something so unaffected in the effort she made to escape observation, that it could have but sprung from natural and innate modesty alone.

As the six men who escorted the unhappy train were together in the room, I took the chief one aside, and asked for information respecting this beautiful girl. All that he could supply was of the most vague kind. We brought her, he said, from the Hospital, by order of the Lieutenant-general of Police. There is no reason to suppose that she was shut up there for good conduct. I have questioned her often upon the road; but she persists in refusing even to answer me. Yet, although I received no orders to make any distinction between her and the others, I cannot help treating her differently, for she seems to me somewhat superior to her companions. Yonder is a young man, continued the archer, who can tell you, better than I can, the cause of her misfortunes. He has followed her from Paris, and has scarcely dried his tears for a single moment. He must be either her brother or her lover.

I turned towards the corner of the room, where this young man was seated. He seemed buried in a profound reverie. Never did I behold a more affecting picture of grief. He was plainly dressed; but one may discover at the first glance a man of birth and education. As I approached him he

rose, and there was so refined and noble an expression in his eyes, in his whole countenance, in his every movement, that I felt an involuntary impulse to render him any service in my power. I am unwilling to intrude upon your sorrows, said I, taking a seat beside him, but you will, perhaps, gratify the desire I feel to learn something about that beautiful girl, who seems little formed by nature for the miserable condition in which she is placed.

He answered me candidly, that he could not communicate her history without making himself known, and that he had urgent reasons for preserving his own incognito. I may, however, tell you thus much, for it is no longer a secret to these wretches, he continued, pointing to the guards,—that I adore her with a passion so ardent and absorbing as to render me the most unhappy of human beings. I tried every means at Paris to effect her liberty. Petitions, artifice, force—all failed. Go where she may, I have resolved to follow her,—to the extremity of the world. I shall embark with her and cross to America.

But think of the brutal inhumanity of these cowardly ruffians, he added, speaking of the guards; they will not allow me to approach her! I had planned an open attack upon them some leagues from Paris, having secured, as I thought, the aid of four men, who for a considerable sum hired me their services. The traitors, however, left me to execute my scheme single-handed, and decamped with my money. The impossibility of success made me of course abandon the attempt. I then implored of the guards permission to follow in their train, promising them a recompense. The love of money procured their consent; but as they required payment every time I was allowed to speak to her, my purse was speedily emptied; and now that I am utterly penniless, they are barbarous enough to repulse me brutally, whenever I make the slightest attempt to approach her. It is but a moment since, that venturing to do so, in spite of their threats, one of the fellows raised the butt-end of his musket. I am now driven by their exactions to dispose of the miserable horse that has brought me hither, and am preparing to continue the journey on foot.

Although he seemed to recite this story tranquilly enough, I observed the tears start to his eyes as he concluded. This adventure struck me as being not less singular than it was affecting. I do not press you, said I to him, to make me the confidant of your secrets; but if I can be of use to you in any way, I gladly tender you my services. Alas! replied

he, I see not the slightest ray of hope. I must reconcile myself to my destiny in all its rigor. I shall go to America: there, at least, I may be free to live with her I love. I have written to a friend, who will send me money to Havre-de-Grace. My only difficulty is to get so far, and to supply that poor creature, added he, as he cast a look of sorrow at his mistress, with some few comforts upon the way. Well! said I to him, I shall relieve you from that difficulty. Here is some money, of which I entreat your acceptance: I am only sorry that I can be of no greater service to you.

I gave him four louis-d'ors without being perceived by the guards; for I thought that if they knew he had this money, they might have raised the price of their concessions. It occurred to me, even to come to an understanding with them, in order to secure for the young man the privilege of conversing with his mistress, during the rest of the journey to Havre, without hindrance. I beckoned the chief to approach, and made the proposition to him. It seemed to abash the ruffian in spite of his habitual effrontery. It is not, sir, said he, in an embarrassed tone, that we refuse to let him speak to the girl, but he wishes to be always near her, which puts us to inconveniences; and it is just that we should be paid for the trouble he occasions. Let us see! said I to him, what would suffice to prevent you from feeling the inconvenience? He had the audacity to demand two louis. I gave them to him on the spot. But have a care, said I to him, that we have no foul play: for I shall give the young man my address, in order that he may write to me on his arrival; and be assured that I am not without the power to punish you. It cost me altogether six louis-d'ors.

The graceful manner and heartfelt gratitude with which the young unknown thanked me, confirmed my notion that he was of good birth, and merited my kindness. I addressed a few words to his mistress before I left the room. She replied to me with a modesty so gentle and so charming that I could not help making, as I went out a thousand reflections upon the incomprehensible character of women.

Returned to my retreat, I remained in ignorance of the result of this adventure; and ere two years had passed, it was completely blotted from my recollection, when chance brought me an opportunity of learning all the circumstances from beginning to end.

I arrived at Calais, from London, with my pupil, the *Marquis of* ———. We lodged, if I remember rightly,

at the Golden Lion, where, for some reason, we were obliged to spend the following day and night. Walking along the streets in the afternoon, I fancied I saw the same young man whom I had formerly met at Passy. He was miserably dressed, and much paler than when I first saw him. He carried on his arm an old portmanteau, having only just arrived in the town. However, there was an expression in his countenance too amiable not to be easily recognized, and which immediately brought his features to my recollection. Observe that young man, said I to the Marquis; we must accost him.

His joy was beyond expression when in his turn, he recognized me. Ah, sir! he cried, kissing my hand, I have then once again an opportunity of testifying my eternal gratitude to you! I inquired of him whence he came. He replied, that he had just arrived, by sea, from Havre, where he had lately landed from America. You do not seem to be too well off for money, said I to him; go on to the Golden Lion, where I am lodging; I will join you in a moment.

I returned, in fact, full of impatience to learn the details of his misfortunes, and the circumstances of his voyage to America. I gave him a thousand welcomes, and ordered that they should supply him with everything he wanted. He did not wait to be solicited for the history of his life. Sir, said he to me, your conduct is so generous, that I should consider it base ingratitude to maintain any reserve towards you. You shall learn not only my misfortunes and sufferings, but my faults and most culpable weaknesses. I am sure that, even while you blame me, you will not refuse me your sympathy.

I should here inform the reader that I wrote down the story almost immediately after hearing it; and he may, therefore, be assured of the correctness and fidelity of the narrative. I use the word fidelity with reference to the substance of reflections and sentiments, which the young man conveyed in the most graceful language. Here, then, is his story, which in its progress I shall not encumber with a single observation that was not his own.

CHAPTER II

"I loved Ophelia! forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum." —SHAKESPEARE.

I WAS seventeen years old, and was finishing my studies at Amiens, whither my parents, who belonged to one of the first families in Picardy, had sent me. I led a life so studious and well regulated, that my masters pointed to me as a model of conduct for the other scholars. Not that I made any extraordinary efforts to acquire this reputation, but my disposition was naturally tractable and tranquil; my inclinations led me to apply to study; and even the natural dislike I felt for vice was placed to my credit as positive proof of virtue. The successful progress of my studies, my birth, and some external advantages of person, made me a general favorite with the inhabitants of the town.

I completed my public exercises with such general approbation, that the bishop of the diocese, who was present, proposed to me to enter the Church, where I could not fail, he said, to acquire more distinction than in the order of Malta, for which my parents had destined me. I was already decorated with the cross, and called the Chevalier des Grieux. The vacation having arrived, I was preparing to return to my father, who had promised to send me soon to the Academy.

My only regret on quitting Amiens arose from parting with a friend, some years older than myself, to whom I had always been tenderly attached. We had been brought up together; but from the straitened circumstances of his family, he was intended to take orders, and was to remain after me at Amiens to complete the requisite studies for his sacred calling. He had a thousand good qualities. You will recognize in him the very best during the course of my history, and above all, a zeal and fervor of friendship which surpass the most illustrious examples of antiquity. If I had at that time followed his advice, I should have always continued a discreet and happy man. If I had even taken coun-

sel from his reproaches, when on the brink of that gulf into which my passions afterwards plunged me, I should have been spared the melancholy wreck of both fortune and reputation. But he was doomed to see his friendly admonitions disregarded; nay, even at times repaid by contempt from an ungrateful wretch, who often dared to treat his fraternal conduct as offensive and officious.

I had fixed the day for my departure from Amiens. Alas! that I had not fixed it one day sooner! I should then have carried to my father's house my innocence untarnished.

The very evening before my expected departure, as I was walking with my friend, whose name was Tiberge, we saw the Arras diligence arrive, and sauntered after it to the inn, at which these coaches stop. We had no other motive than curiosity. Some women alighted, and immediately retired into the inn. One remained behind: she was very young, and stood by herself in the court, while a man of advanced age, who appeared to have charge of her, was busy in getting her luggage from the vehicle. She struck me as being so extremely beautiful, that I, who had never before thought of the difference between the sexes, or looked on woman with the slightest attention—I, whose conduct had been hitherto the theme of universal admiration, felt myself, on the instant, deprived of my reason and self-control. I had been always excessively timid, and easily disconcerted; but, now, instead of meeting with any impediments from this weakness, I advanced without the slightest reserve towards her, who had thus become, in a moment, the mistress of my heart.

Although younger than myself, she received my civilities without embarrassment. I asked the cause of her journey to Amiens, and whether she had any acquaintances in the town. She ingenuously told me that she had been sent there by her parents, to commence her novitiate for taking the veil. Love had so quickened my perception, even in the short moment it had been enthroned, that I saw in this announcement a death-blow to my hopes. I spoke to her in a way that made her at once understand what was passing in my mind; for she had more experience than myself. It was against her consent that she was consigned to a convent, doubtless to repress that inclination for pleasure which had already become too manifest, and which caused, in the sequel, all her misfortunes and mine. I combatted the cruel intention of her parents with all the arguments that my new-born passion and school-boy eloquence could suggest. She affected neither

austerity nor reserve. She told me, after a moment's silence, that she foresaw, too clearly, what her unhappy fate must be; but that it was, apparently, the will of Heaven, since there were no means left her to avert it. The sweetness of her look, the air of sorrow with which she pronounced these words, or rather perhaps the controlling destiny which led me on to ruin, allowed me not an instant to weigh my answer. I assured her that if she would place reliance on my honor and on the tender interest with which she had already inspired me, I would sacrifice my life to deliver her from the tyranny of her parents, and to render her happy. I have since been a thousand times astonished, in reflecting upon it, to think how I could have expressed myself with so much boldness and facility; but Love could never have become a divinity, if he had not often worked miracles.

I made many other pressing and tender speeches; and my unknown fair one was perfectly aware that mine was not the age for deceit. She confessed to me that if I could see but a reasonable hope of being able to effect her enfranchisement, she should deem herself indebted for my kindness in more than life itself could pay. I repeated that I was ready to attempt anything in her behalf; but, not having sufficient experience at once to imagine any reasonable plan of serving her, I did not go beyond this general assurance, from which indeed little good could arise either to her or to myself. Her old guardian having by this time joined us, my hopes would have been blighted, but that she had tact enough to make amends for my stupidity. I was surprised, on his approaching us, to hear her call me her cousin, and say, without being in the slightest degree disconcerted, that as she had been so fortunate as to fall in with me at Amiens, she would not go into the convent until the next morning, in order to have the pleasure of meeting me at supper. Innocent as I was, I at once comprehended the meaning of this ruse; and proposed that she should lodge for the night at the house of an innkeeper, who, after being many years my father's coachman, had lately established himself at Amiens, and who was sincerely attached to me.

I conducted her there myself, at which the old Argus appeared to grumble a little; and my friend Tiberge, who was puzzled by the whole scene, followed, without uttering a word. He had not heard our conversation, having walked up and down the court, while I was talking of love to my *angelic mistress*. As I had some doubts of his discretion, I *got rid of him*, by begging that he would execute a com-

mission for me. I had thus the happiness, on arriving at the inn, of entertaining alone the sovereign of my heart.

I soon learned that I was less a child than I had before imagined. My heart expanded to a thousand sentiments of pleasure, of which I had not before the remotest idea. A delicious consciousness of enjoyment diffused itself through my whole mind and soul. I sunk into a kind of ecstasy, which deprived me for a time of the power of utterance, and which found vent only in a flood of tears.

MANON LESCAUT (this she told me was her name), seemed gratified by the visible effect of her own charms. She appeared to me not less excited than myself. She acknowledged that she was greatly pleased with me, and that she should be enchanted to owe to me her freedom and future happiness. She would insist on hearing who I was, and the knowledge only augmented her affection; for, being herself of humble birth, she was flattered by securing for her lover a man of family.

After many reflections, we could discover no other resource than in flight. To effect this it would be requisite to cheat the vigilance of Manon's guardian, who required management, although he was but a servant. We determined, therefore, that, during the night, I should procure a post-chaise, and return with it at break of day to the inn, before he was awake; that we should steal away quietly, and go straight to Paris, where we might be married on our arrival. I had about fifty crowns in my pocket, the fruit of my little savings at school; and she had about twice as much. We imagined, like inexperienced children, that such a sum could never be exhausted, and we counted, with equal confidence, upon the success of our other schemes.

After having supped, with certainly more satisfaction than I had ever before experienced, I retired to prepare for our project. All my arrangements were the more easy, because, for the purpose of returning, on the morrow, to my father's, my luggage had been already packed. I had, therefore, no difficulty in removing my trunk, and having a chaise prepared for five o'clock in the morning, at which hour the gates of the town would be opened; but I encountered an obstacle which I was little prepared for, and which nearly upset all my plans.

Tiberge, although only three years older than myself, was a youth of unusually strong mind, and of the best regulated conduct. He loved me with singular affection. The sight of so lovely a girl as Manon, my ill-disguised impatience to

conduct her to the inn, and the anxiety I betrayed to get rid of him, had excited in his mind some suspicions of my passion. He had not ventured to return to the inn where he had left me, for fear of my being annoyed at his doing so; but went to wait for me at my lodgings, where, although it was ten o'clock at night, I found him on my arrival. His presence annoyed me, and he soon perceived the restraint which it imposed. I am certain, he said to me, without any disguise, that you have some plan in contemplation which you will not confide to me; I see it by your manner. I answered him rather abruptly, that I was not bound to render him an account of all my movements. Certainly not! he replied; but you have always, hitherto, treated me as a friend, and that appellation implies a certain degree of confidence and candor. He pressed me so much and so earnestly to discover my secret, that, having never up to that moment felt the slightest reserve towards him, I confided to him now the whole history of my passion. He heard it with an appearance of disapprobation, which made me tremble; and I immediately repented of my indiscretion, in telling him of my intended elopement. He told me he was too sincerely my friend not to oppose every obstacle in his power to such a scheme; that he would first try all other means of turning me from such a purpose, but that if I refused to renounce so fatal a resolution, he assuredly would inform some persons of my intention, who would be able to defeat it. He held forth upon the subject for a full quarter of an hour, in the most serious tone, and ended by again threatening to inform against me, if I did not pledge him my word that I would return to the paths of discretion and reason.

I was in despair at having so awkwardly betrayed myself. However, Love having wonderfully sharpened my intellect during the last two or three hours, I recollected that I had not yet told him of its being my intention to execute my project on the following morning, and I at once determined to deceive him by a little equivocation.

Tiberge, said I to him, up to the present moment I thought you were my friend; and I wished to prove it by the test of confidence. It is true, I am in love; I have not deceived you: but with regard to my flight, that is a project not to be undertaken without deliberation. Call for me to-morrow at nine o'clock: you shall see my mistress, if it be possible, and then judge whether she is not worthy of any risk or sacrifice on my part. He left me with a thousand protestations of friendship.

I employed the night in preparing for the journey, and on repairing to the inn at early dawn, I found Manon waiting my arrival. She was at her window, which looked upon the street, and perceiving my approach, she came down and opened the door herself. We took our departure silently, and without creating the least alarm. She merely brought away a small portion of her apparel, of which I took charge. The chaise was in readiness, and we were soon at a distance from the town.

You will learn in the sequel what was the conduct of Tiberge, when he discovered that I had deceived him; that his zeal to serve me suffered no diminution; and you will observe to what lengths his devotion carried him. How ought I to grieve, when I reflect on the base ingratitude with which his affection was always repaid!

We made such speed on our journey that before night we reached St. Denis. I rode alongside of the chaise, which gave us little opportunity for conversation, except while changing horses; but when we found ourselves so near Paris, and out of reach of danger, we allowed ourselves time for refreshment, not having tasted food since we quitted Amiens. Passionately in love as I felt with Manon, she knew how to convince me that she was equally so with me. So little did we restrain our fondness, that we had not even the patience to reserve our caresses till we were alone. The postillions and innkeepers stared at us with wonder, and I remarked that they appeared surprised at such uncontrollable love in children of our age.

Our project of marriage was forgotten at St. Denis; we defrauded the Church of her rights; and found ourselves united as man and wife without reflecting on the consequences. It is certain that with my easy and constant disposition, I should have been happy for my whole life, if Manon had remained faithful to me. The more I saw of her, the more I discovered in her new perfections. Her mind, her heart, her gentleness and beauty, formed a chain at once so binding and so agreeable, that I could have found perfect happiness in its enduring influence. Terrible fatality! that which has been the source of my despair, might, under a slight change of circumstances, have constituted my happiness. I find myself the most wretched of mankind, by the force of that very constancy from which I might have fairly expected to derive the most serene of human blisses and the most perfect recompense of love.

We took a furnished apartment at Paris, in the Rue V——

and, as it afterwards turned out, to my sorrow, close to the house of M. de B——, the famous Fermier-général. Three weeks passed, during which I was so absorbed in my passion, that I never gave a thought to my family, nor dreamed of the distress which my father probably felt at my absence. However, as there was yet nothing of profligacy about me, and as Manon conducted herself with the strictest propriety, the tranquil life we led served to restore me by degrees to a sense of duty.

I resolved to effect, if possible, a reconciliation with my parent. My mistress was to me so perfectly lovable, that I could not doubt her power of captivating my father, if I could only find the means of making him acquainted with her good conduct and merit. In a word, I relied on obtaining his consent to our marriage, having given up all idea of accomplishing it without his approval. I mentioned the project to Manon, and explained to her that, besides every motive of filial love and duty, the weightier one of necessity should also have some influence; for our finances were sadly reduced, and I began to see the folly of thinking them, as I once did, inexhaustible.

Manon received the proposition with considerable coldness. However, the difficulties she made, being apparently the suggestions of tenderness alone, or as arising from the natural fear of losing me, if my father, after learning our address, should refuse his assent to our union, I had not the smallest suspicion of the cruel blow she was at the very time preparing to inflict. As to the argument of necessity, she replied that we had still abundant means of living for some weeks longer, and that she would then find a resource in the kindness of some relations in the country, to whom she should write. She tempered her opposition by caresses sc tender and impassioned, that I, who lived only for her and who never had the slightest misgiving as to her love, applauded at once her arguments and her resolutions.

To Manon I had committed the care of our finances, and the household arrangements. In a short time I observed that our style of living was improved, and that she had treated herself to more expensive dresses. As I calculated that we could hardly have at this period more than fifteen or twenty crowns remaining, I did not conceal my surprise at this mysterious augmentation of our wealth. She begged of me, with a smile, to give myself no trouble on that head. Did I not promise you, said she, that I would find re-

sources? I loved her too purely to experience the slightest suspicion.

One day, having gone out in the afternoon, and told her that I should not be at home so early as usual, I was astonished, on my return, at being detained several minutes at the door. Our only servant was a young girl about our own age. On her letting me in at last, I asked why she had detained me so long? She replied in an embarrassed tone, that she did not hear me knock. I only knocked once, said I; so if you did not hear me, why come to open the door at all? This query disconcerted her so visibly, that losing her presence of mind, she began to cry, assuring me that it was not her fault; and that her mistress had desired her not to open the door until M. de B—— had had time to go down by the back staircase. I was so confounded by this information as to be utterly unable to proceed to our apartment; and was obliged to leave the house, under the pretext of an appointment. I desired the girl, therefore, to let her mistress know that I should return in a few minutes, but on no account to say that she had spoken to me of M. de B——.

My horror was so great, that I shed tears as I went along, hardly knowing from what feeling they flowed. I entered a coffee-house close by, and placing myself at a table, I buried my face between my hands, as though I would turn my eyes inward to ascertain what was passing in my heart. Still, I dared not recall what I had heard the moment before. I strove to look upon it as a dream; and was more than once on the point of returning to my lodgings, determined to attach no importance to what I had heard. It appeared to me so impossible that Manon could have been unfaithful, that I feared even to wrong her by a suspicion. I adored her—that was too certain; I had not on my part given her more proofs of my love than I had received of hers; why then should I charge her with being less sincere and constant than myself? What reason could she have to deceive me? Not three hours before, she had lavished upon me the most tender caresses, and had received mine with transport: I knew her heart as thoroughly as my own. No, no! I said, it is not possible that Manon can have deceived me. She well knows that I live but for her; that I adore her; upon that point I can have no reason to be unhappy.

Notwithstanding these reflections, the visit of M. de B——, and his secret departure, gave me some uneasiness. I remembered, too, the little purchases she had lately made, which seemed beyond our present means. This looked like the

liberality of a new lover. And the confidence with which she had foretold resources which were to me unknown? I had some difficulty in solving these mysteries in as favorable a manner as my heart desired.

On the other hand, she had been hardly out of my sight since we entered Paris. However occupied, in our walks, in all our amusements, she was ever at my side. Heavens! even a momentary separation would have been too painful. I could not therefore imagine how Manon could, to any other person, have devoted a single instant.

At last I thought I had discovered a clue to the mystery. M. de B——, said I to myself, is a man extensively engaged in commercial affairs; and Manon's relations have no doubt remitted her money through his house. She has probably already received some from him, and he is come to-day to bring her more. She wishes, perhaps, to derive amusement by-and-bye, from an agreeable surprise, by keeping me at present in the dark. She would doubtless have at once told me all, if I had gone in as usual, instead of coming here to distress myself: at all events, she will not conceal it from me when I broach the subject myself.

I cherished this idea so willingly, that it considerably lightened my grief. I immediately returned to my lodgings, and embraced Manon as tenderly as ever. She received me as usual. At first I was tempted to mention my conjectures, which I now, more than ever, looked upon as certain; but I restrained myself in the hope that she might render it unnecessary by informing me of all that had passed.

Supper was served. Assuming an air of gaiety, I took my seat at table; but by the light of the candles which were between us, I fancied I perceived an air of melancholy about the eyes and countenance of my beloved mistress. The very thought soon damped my gaiety. I remarked that her looks wore an unusual expression, and although nothing could be more soft or languishing, I was at a loss to discover whether they conveyed more of love than compassion. I gazed at her with equal earnestness, and she perhaps had no less difficulty in comprehending from my countenance what was passing in my heart. We neither spoke nor ate. At length I saw tears starting from her beauteous eyes,—perfidious tears! O heavens! I cried, my dearest Manon, why allow your sorrows to afflict you to this degree without imparting their cause to me? She answered me only with sighs, which increased my misery. I arose trembling from my seat; I conjured her, with all the urgent earnestness of love, to let

me know the cause of her grief: I wept in endeavoring to soothe her sorrows: I was more dead than alive. A barbarian would have pitied my sufferings as I stood trembling with grief and apprehension.

While my attention was thus confined to her, I heard people coming up stairs. They tapped gently at the door. Manon gave me a kiss, and escaping from my arms, quickly entered the boudoir, turning the key after her. I imagined that, not being dressed to receive strangers, she was unwilling to meet the persons who had knocked; I went to let them in.

I had hardly opened the door, when I found myself seized by three men, whom I recognized as my father's servants. They offered not the least violence, but two of them taking me by the arms, the third examined my pockets, and took out a small knife, the only weapon I had about me. They begged pardon for the necessity they were under of treating me with apparent disrespect; telling me frankly that they were acting by the orders of my father, and that my eldest brother was in a carriage below waiting to receive me. My feelings were so overpowered, that I allowed myself to be led away without making either reply or resistance. I found my brother waiting for me as they had stated. They placed me by his side, and the coachman immediately drove, by his orders, towards St. Denis. My brother embraced me most affectionately, but during our ride he uttered not a word, so that, as I was not inclined for conversation, I had as much leisure as I could desire to reflect upon my misfortunes.

CHAPTER III

"That we can call these delicate creatures ours,
And not their appetites."—Shakespeare.

The whole affair was so involved in obscurity that I could not see my way even to a reasonable conjecture. I was cruelly betrayed,—that was certain; but by whom? Tiberge first occurred to me. Tiberge! said I, it is as much as thy life is worth, if my suspicions turn out to be well founded. However, I recollected that he could not by any possibility know my abode; and therefore, he could not have furnished the information. To accuse Manon was more than my heart was capable of. The unusual melancholy with which she had lately seemed weighed down, her tears, the tender kiss she gave me in parting, made it all as yet a mystery to me. I could only look upon her recent melancholy as a presentiment of our common misfortune; and while I was deploring the event which tore me from her, I was credulous enough to consider her fate as much deserving of pity as my own.

The result of my reflections was, that I had been seen and followed in the streets of Paris by some persons of my acquaintance, who had conveyed the information to my father. This idea comforted me. I made up my mind to encounter some reproaches, or perhaps harsh treatment, for having outraged paternal authority. I resolved however to suffer with patience, and to promise all that might be required of me, in order to facilitate my speedy return to Paris, that I might restore life and happiness to my dear Manon.

We soon arrived at St. Denis. My brother, surprised at my long silence, thought it the effect of fear. He assured me that I had nothing to apprehend from my father's severity, provided I showed a disposition to return quietly to the path of duty, and prove myself worthy of his affection. He made me pass the night at St. Denis, merely taking the precaution of putting the three lackeys to sleep in my room. It cost me a pang to find myself in the same inn where I had stopped with Manon on our way from Amiens to Paris. The innkeeper and his servants recognized me, and guessed at once the truth of my history. I overheard them say, Ah!

that's the handsome young gentleman who travelled this road about a month ago, with the beautiful girl he appeared so much in love with! How pretty she was! The poor young things, how they caressed each other! Pity if they have been separated! I pretended not to hear, and kept as much out of sight as possible.

At St. Denis my brother had a chariot waiting for us, in which we started early the next morning, and arrived at home before night. He saw my father first, in order to make a favorable impression by telling him how quietly I had allowed myself to be brought away, so that his reception of me was less austere than I had expected. He merely rebuked me in general terms for the offense I had committed, by absenting myself without his permission. As for my mistress, he said I richly deserved what had happened to me, for abandoning myself to a person utterly unknown; that he had entertained a better opinion of my discretion but that he hoped this little adventure would make me wiser. I took the whole lecture only in the sense that accorded with my own notions. I thanked my father for his indulgence, and promised that I would in future observe a better regulated and more obedient course of conduct. I felt that I had secured a triumph; for, from the present aspect of affairs, there was no doubt that I should be free to effect my escape from the house even before the night was over.

We sat down to supper. They rallied me about my Amiens conquest, and my flight with that paragon of fidelity. I took their jokes in good part, glad enough at being permitted to revolve in my mind the plans I had meditated; but some words which fell from my father made me listen with earnest attention. He spoke of perfidy, and the not disinterested kindness he had received at the hands of M. de B——. I was almost paralyzed on hearing the name, and begged of my father to explain himself. He turned to my brother, to ask if he had not told me the whole story. My brother answered, that I appeared to him so tranquil upon the road, that he did not suppose I required this remedy to cure me of my folly. I remarked that my father was doubtful whether he should give me the explanation or not. I entreated him so earnestly that he satisfied me, or I should rather say tortured me, with the following most horrible narration.

He began by asking me whether I was really simple enough to believe that I had been really loved by the girl. I told him confidently that I was perfectly sure of it, and that nothing could make me for a moment doubt it. Ha

ha, ha! said he, with a loud laugh; that is excellent! you are a pretty dupe! Admirable idea! 'Twould be a thousand pities, my poor chevalier, to make you a Knight of Malta, with all the requisites you possess for a patient and accommodating husband. He continued in the same tone to ridicule what he was pleased to call my dullness and credulity.

He concluded, while I maintained a profound silence, by saying that, according to the nicest calculation he could make of the time since my departure from Amiens, Manon must have been in love with me about twelve days; for, said he, I know that you left Amiens on the 28th of last month; this is the 29th of the present; it is eleven days since M. de B—— wrote to me; I suppose he required eight days to establish a perfect understanding with your mistress; so that, take eight and eleven from thirty-one days, the time between the 28th of one month and the 29th of the next, there remains twelve, more or less! This joke was followed by shouts of laughter.

I heard it all with a kind of sinking of the heart that I thought I could not bear up against, until he finished. You must know them, continued my father, since you appear as yet ignorant of it, that M. de B—— has won the affections of your idol; for he can't be serious in pretending that it is his disinterested regard for me that has induced him to take her from you. It would be absurd to expect such noble sentiments from a man of his description, and one, besides, who is a perfect stranger to me. He knew that you were my son, and in order to get rid of you, he wrote to inform me of your abode, and of the life you led; saying, at the same time, that strong measures would be necessary to secure you. He offered to procure me the means of laying hold of you; and it was by his direction, as well as that of your mistress herself, that your brother hit upon the moment for catching you unawares. Now, you may congratulate yourself upon the duration of your triumph. You know how to conquer, rapidly enough; but you have yet to learn how to secure your conquests.

I could no longer endure these remarks, every one of which struck a dagger to my heart. I arose from the table, and had not advanced four steps towards the door, when I fell upon the floor, perfectly senseless. By prompt applications they soon brought me to myself. My eyes opened only to shed a torrent of tears, and my lips to utter the most sorrowful and heart-rending complaints. My father, who always loved me the most affectionately, tried every means to

console me. I listened to him, but his words were without effect. I threw myself at his feet, in the attitude of prayer, conjuring him to let me return to Paris, and destroy the monster B——. No! cried I; he has not gained Manon's heart. Manon loves me. Do I not know that well? He must have terrified her with a poniard to induce her to abandon me. What must he not have done to have robbed me of my angelic mistress? O Heaven! Heaven! can it be possible that Manon deceived me, or that she has ceased to love me!

As I continued to rave about returning at once to Paris, and was perpetually starting up with that purpose, my father clearly saw that while the paroxysm lasted, no arguments could pacify me. He conducted me to one of the upper rooms, and left two servants to keep constant watch over me. I was completely bewildered. I would have given a thousand lives, to be but for one quarter of an hour in Paris. I had sense enough, however, to know that having so openly declared my intention, they would not easily allow me to quit my chamber. I looked at the height of the windows. Seeing no possibility of escaping that way, I addressed the servants in the most tranquil tone. I promised, with the most solemn vows, to make, at some future day, their fortunes, if they would but consent to my escape. I entreated them; I tried caresses, and lastly threats, but all were unavailing. I gave myself up to despair. I resolved to die; and threw myself upon the bed, with a firm determination to quit it only with my life. In this situation I passed the night and the following day. I refused the nourishment that was brought to me next morning.

My father came to see me in the afternoon. He tried, in the most affectionate manner, to soothe my grief. He desired me so urgently to take some refreshment, that, to gratify him, I obeyed his wishes. Several days passed, during which I took nothing but in his presence, and at his special request. He continued to furnish new arguments to restore me to my proper senses and to inspire me with merited contempt for the faithless Manon. I certainly had lost all esteem for her: how could I esteem the most fickle and perfidious of created beings! But her image—those exquisite features, which were engraven on my heart's core, were still uneffaced. I understood my own feelings; I may die, said I, and I ought to die after so much shame and grief; but I might suffer a thousand deaths without being able to forget the ingrate Manon.

My father was surprised at my still continuing so powerfully affected. He knew that I was imbued with the principles of honor; and not doubting that her infidelity must make me despise her, fancied that my obstinacy proceeded less from this particular passion, than from a general inclination towards the sex. This idea so took possession of his mind, that, prompted only by his affection for me, he came one day to reveal his thoughts. Chevalier, said he to me, it has been hitherto my intention to make you bear the cross of Malta: I now see that your inclinations do not bend that way. You are an admirer of beauty. I shall be able to find you a wife to your taste. Let me candidly know how you feel upon the subject.

I answered that I could never again see the slightest difference amongst women, and that after the misfortune I had experienced, I detested them all equally. I will find you one, replied my father, smiling, who shall resemble Manon in beauty, but who shall be more faithful. Ah! if you have any mercy, said I, you will restore my Manon to me. Be assured, my dear father, that she has not betrayed me; she is incapable of such base and cruel treachery. It is the perfidious B—— who deceives both her and me. If you could form an idea of her tenderness and her sincerity, —if you only knew her, you yourself would love her! You are absolutely a child, replied my father. How can you so delude yourself, after what I have told you about her? It was she who actually delivered you up to your brother. You ought to obliterate even her name from your memory, and take advantage, if you are wise, of the indulgence I am showing you.

I very clearly perceived that my father was right. It was an involuntary emotion that made me thus take part with the traitor. Alas! replied I, after a moment's silence, it is but too true that I am the unhappy victim of the vilest perfidy. Yes, I continued, while shedding tears of anger, I too clearly perceive that I am indeed but a child. Credulity like mine was easily gulled; but I shall be at no loss to revenge myself. My father inquired of me my intentions: I will go to Paris, I said, set fire to B——'s house and immolate him and the perfidious Manon together. This burst made my father laugh, and had only the effect of causing me to be more vigilantly watched in my cell.

I thus passed six long months; during the first of which, my mind underwent little change. My feelings were in a state of perpetual alternation between hate and love; be-

tween hope and despair; according as the tendency of each passing thought brought Manon back to my recollection. At one time, I could see in her the most delightful of women only, and sigh for the pleasure of beholding her once more; at another, I felt she was the most unworthy and perfidious of mistresses, and I would on these occasions swear never again to seek her, but for the purpose of revenge.

I was supplied with books, which served to restore my peace of mind. I read once again all my favorite authors; and I became acquainted with new ones. All my former taste for study was revived. You will see of what use this was to me in the sequel. The light I had already derived from Love, enabled me to comprehend many passages in Horace and Virgil which had before appeared obscure. I wrote an amatory Commentary upon the fourth book of the Æneid. I intend one day to publish it, and I flatter myself it will be popular.

Alas! I used to exclaim, whilst employed on that work, it was for a heart like mine the faithful Dido sighed, and sighed in vain!

CHAPTER IV

"Now by the strange enchantment that surrounds thee,
There's nothing—nothing thou shalt ask in vain."
—ESSEX.

WHILE in my confinement Tiberge came one day to see me. I was surprised at the affectionate joy with which he saluted me. I had never, hitherto, observed any peculiar warmth in his friendship that could lead me to look upon it as anything more than the partiality common among boys of the same age. He was so altered, and had grown so manly during the five or six months since I had last seen him, that his expressive features and his manner of addressing me inspired me with a feeling of respect. He spoke more in the character of a Mentor than a schoolfellow, lamented the delusion into which I had fallen, congratulated me on my reformation, which he believed was now sincere, and ended by exhorting me to profit by my youthful error, and open my eyes to the vanity of worldly pleasures. I looked at him with some astonishment, which he at once perceived.

My dear chevalier, said he to me, you shall hear nothing but the strict truth, of which I have assured myself by the most serious examination. I had, perhaps, as strong an inclination for pleasure as you, but Heaven had at the same time, in its mercy, blessed me with a taste for virtue. I exercised my reason in comparing the consequences of the one with those of the other, and the divine aid was graciously vouchsafed to my reflections. I conceived for the world a contempt which nothing can equal. Can you guess what it is retains me in it now he added, and that prevents me from embracing a life of solitude? Simply the sincere friendship I bear towards you. I know the excellent qualities of both your heart and head. There is no good of which you may not render yourself capable. The blandishments of pleasure have momentarily drawn you aside. What detriment to the sacred cause of virtue! Your flight from Amiens gave me such intense sorrow, that I have not since known a moment's happiness. You may

judge of this by the steps it induced me to take. He then told me how, after discovering that I had deceived him, and gone off with my mistress, he procured horses for the purpose of pursuing me, but having the start of him by four or five hours, he found it impossible to overtake me; that he arrived, however, at St. Denis half an hour after I had left it; that, being very sure that I must have stopped in Paris, he spent six weeks there in a fruitless endeavor to discover me,—visiting every place where he thought he should be likely to meet me, and that one evening he at length recognized my mistress at the play, where she was so gorgeously dressed, that he of course set it down to the account of some new lover; that he had followed her equipage to her house, and had there learned from a servant that she was entertained in this style by M. de B——. I did not stop here, continued he; I returned next day to the house, to learn from her own lips what had become of you. She turned abruptly away when she heard the mention of your name, and I was obliged to return into the country without further information. I there learned the particulars of your adventure, and the extreme annoyance she had caused you; but I was unwilling to visit you until I could have assurance of your being in a more tranquil state.

You have seen Manon, then! cried I, sighing. Alas! you are happier than I, who am doomed never again to behold her. He rebuked me for this sigh, which still showed my weakness for the perfidious girl. He flattered me so adroitly upon the goodness of my mind and disposition, that he really inspired me, even on this first visit, with a strong inclination to renounce, as he had done, the pleasures of the world, and enter at once into holy orders.

The idea was so suited to my present frame of mind, that when alone I thought of nothing else. I remembered the words of the Bishop of Amiens, who had given me the same advice, and thought only of the happiness which he predicted would result from my adoption of such a course. Piety itself took part in these suggestions. I shall lead a holy and a Christian life, said I; I shall divide my time between study and religion, which will allow me no leisure for the perilous pleasures of love. I shall despise that which men ordinarily admire; and as I am conscious that my heart will desire nothing but what it can esteem, my cares will *not be* greater or more numerous than my wants and *wishes.*

I thereupon pictured to myself in anticipation a course of life peaceful and retired. I fancied a retreat embosomed in a wood, with a limpid stream of running water bounding my garden; a library, comprising the most select works; a limited circle of friends, virtuous and intellectual; a table neatly served, but frugal and temperate. To all these agrémens I added a literary correspondence with a friend whose residence should be in Paris, who should give me occasional information upon public affairs, less for the gratification of my curiosity, than to afford a kind of relaxation by hearing of and lamenting the busy follies of men. Shall not I be happy? added I; will not my utmost wishes be thus gratified? This project flattered my inclinations extremely. But after all the details of this most admirable and prudent plan, I felt that my heart still yearned for something; and that in order to leave nothing to desire in this most enchanting retirement, one ought to be able to share it with Manon.

However, Tiberge continuing to pay me frequent visits in order to strengthen me in the purpose with which he had inspired me, I took an opportunity of opening the subject to my father. He declared that his intention ever was to leave his children free to choose a profession, and that in whatever manner I should dispose of myself, all he wished to reserve was the right of aiding me with his counsel. On this occasion he gave me some of the wisest, which tended less to divert me from my project, than to convince me of my good father's sound judgment and discretion.

The recommencement of the scholastic year being at hand, Tiberge and I agreed to enter ourselves together at St. Sulpice; he to pursue his theological studies, and I to begin mine. His merits, which were not unknown to the bishop of the diocese, procured him the promise of a living from that prelate before our departure.

My father, thinking me quite cured of my passion, made no objection to my taking final leave. We arrived at Paris. The cross of Malta gave place to the ecclesiastical habit, and the designation of the Abbé des Grieux was substituted for that of Chevalier. I applied so diligently to study, that in a few months I had made extraordinary progress. I never lost a moment of the day, and employed even part of the night. I soon acquired such a reputation, that I was already congratulated upon the honors which I was sure of obtaining; and, without solicitation on my part, my name was inscribed on the list for a vacant benefice. Piety was by no means neglected, and I entered with ardent devotion

into all the exercises of religion. Tiberge was proud of what he considered the work of his own hands, and many a time have I seen him shed tears of delight in noticing what he styled my perfect conversion.

It has never been matter of wonder to me that human resolutions are liable to change; one passion gives them birth, another may destroy them: but when I reflect upon the sacredness of those motives that led me to St. Sulpice, and upon the heartfelt satisfaction I enjoyed while obeying their dictation, I shudder at the facility with which I outraged them all. If it be true that the benign succor afforded by Heaven is at all times equal to the strongest of man's passions, I shall be glad to learn the nature of the deplorable ascendancy which causes us suddenly to swerve from the path of duty, without the power of offering the least resistance, and without even the slightest visitation of remorse.

I now thought myself entirely safe from the dangers of love. I fancied that I could have preferred a single page of St. Augustine, or a quarter of an hour of Christian meditation, to every sensual gratification, not excepting any that I might have derived even from Manon's society. Nevertheless, one unlucky moment plunged me again headlong into the gulf; and my ruin was the more irreparable, because, falling at once to the same depth from whence I had been before rescued, each of the new disorders into which I now lapsed, carried me deeper and deeper still down the profound abyss of vice. I had passed nearly a year at Paris without hearing of Manon. It cost me no slight effort to abstain from inquiry; but the unintermitting advice of Tiberge, and my own reflections, secured this victory over my wishes. The last months glided away so tranquilly, that I considered the memory of this charming but treacherous creature about to be consigned to eternal oblivion.

The time arrived when I was to undergo a public examination in the class of theology; I invited several persons of consideration to honor me with their presence on the occasion. My name was mentioned in every quarter of Paris: it even reached the ears of her who had betrayed me. She had some difficulty in recognizing it with the prefix of Abbé; but curiosity, or perhaps remorse for having been faithless to me (I could never after ascertain by which of these feelings she was actuated), made her at once take an interest in a name so like mine; and she came with several other women to the Sorbonne, where she was

present at my examination, and had doubtless little trouble in recognizing my person.

I had not the remotest suspicion of her presence. It is well known that in these places there are private seats for ladies, where they remain screened by a curtain. I returned to St. Sulpice covered with honors and congratulations. It was six in the evening. The moment I returned, a lady was announced, who desired to speak with me. I went to meet her. Heavens! what a surprise! It was Manon. It was she indeed, but more bewitching and brilliant that I had ever beheld her. She was now in her eighteenth year. Her beauty beggars all description. The exquisite grace of her form, the mild sweetness of expression that animated her features, and her engaging air, made her seem the very personification of Love. The vision was something too perfect for human beauty.

I stood like one enchanted at beholding her. Unable to divine the object of her visit, I waited trembling and with downcast looks until she explained herself. At first, her embarrassment was equal to mine; but, seeing that I was not disposed to break silence, she raised her hand to her eyes to conceal a starting tear, and then, in a timid tone, said that she well knew she had justly earned my abhorrence by her infidelity; but that if I had ever really felt any love for her, there was not much kindness in allowing two long years to pass without inquiring after her, and as little now in seeing her in the state of mental distress in which she was, without condescending to bestow upon her a single word. I shall not attempt to describe what my feelings were as I listened to this reproof.

She seated herself. I remained standing, with my face half turned aside, for I could not muster courage to meet her look. I several times commenced a reply without power to conclude it. At length I made an effort, and in a tone of poignant grief exclaimed: Perfidious Manon! perfidious, perfidious creature! She had no wish, she repeated with a flood of tears, to attempt to justify her infidelity. What is your wish, then? cried I. I wish to die, she answered, if you will not give me back that heart, without which it is impossible to endure life. Take my life, too, then, faithless girl! I exclaimed, in vain endeavoring to restrain my tears; take my life also! it is the sole sacrifice that remains for me to make, for my heart has never ceased to be thine.

I had hardly uttered these words, when she rose in a trans-

port of joy, and approached to embrace me. She loaded me with a thousand caresses. She addressed me by all the endearing appellations with which Love supplies his votaries, to enable them to express the most passionate fondness. I still answered with affected coldness; but the sudden transition from a state of quietude, such as that I had up to this moment enjoyed to the agitation and tumult which were now kindled in my breast and tingled through my veins, thrilled me with a kind of horror, and impressed me with a vague sense that I was about to undergo some great transformation, and to enter upon a new existence.

We sat down close by each other. I took her hand within mine. Ah! Manon, said I, with a look of sorrow, I little thought that love like mine could have been repaid with treachery! It was a poor triumph to betray a heart of which you were the absolute mistress,—whose sole happiness it was to gratify and obey you. Tell me if among others you have found any so affectionate and so devoted? No, no! I believe Nature has cast few hearts in the same mould as mine. Tell me at least whether you have ever thought of me with regret! Can I have any reliance on the duration of the feeling that has brought you back to me to-day? I perceive too plainly that you are infinitely lovelier than ever; but I conjure you by all my past sufferings, dearest Manon, to tell me,—Can you in future be more faithful?

She gave me in reply such tender assurances of her repentance, and pledged her fidelity with such solemn protestations and vows, that I was inexpressibly affected. Beauteous Manon, said I, with rather a profane mixture of amorous and theological expressions, you are too adorable for a created being. I feel my heart transported with triumphant rapture. It is folly to talk of liberty at St. Sulpice. Fortune and reputation are but slight sacrifices at such a shrine! I plainly foresee it; I can read my destiny in your bright eyes; but what abundant recompense shall I not find in your affections for any loss I may sustain! The favors of Fortune have no influence over me: Fame itself appears to me but a mockery; all my projects of a holy life were wild absurdities; in fact, any joys but those I may hope for at your side are fit objects of contempt. There are none that would not vanish into worthlessness before one single glance of thine!

In promising her, however, a full remission of her past frailties, I inquired how she permitted herself to be led

astray by B——. She informed me that having seen her at our window, he became passionately in love with her; that he made his advances in the true style of a citizen;—that is to say, by giving her to understand in his letter, that his payments would be proportioned to her favors; that she had admitted his overtures at first with no other intention than that of getting from him such a sum as might enable us to live without inconvenience; but that he had so bewildered her with splendid promises, that she allowed herself to be misled by degrees. She added, that I ought to have formed some notion of the remorse she experienced, by her grief on the night of our separation; and assured me that, in spite of the splendor in which he maintained her, she had never known a moment's happiness with him, not only, she said, because he was utterly devoid of that delicacy of sentiment and of those agreeable manners which I possessed, but because even in the midst of the amusements which he unceasingly procured her, she could never shake off the recollection of my love, or her own ingratitude. She then spoke of Tiberge and the extreme embarrassment his visit caused her. A dagger's point, she added, could not have struck more terror to my heart. I turned from him, unable to sustain the interview for a moment.

She continued to inform me how she had been apprised of my residence at Paris, of the change in my condition, and of her witnessing my examination at the Sorbonne. She told me how agitated she had been during my intellectual conflict with the examiner; what difficulty she felt in restraining her tears as well as her sighs, which were more than once on the point of spurning all control, and bursting forth; that she was the last person to leave the hall of examination, for fear of betraying her distress, and that, following only the instinct of her own heart, and her ardent desires, she came direct to the seminary with the firm resolution of surrendering life itself, if she found me cruel enough to withhold my forgiveness.

Could any savage remain unmoved by such proofs of cordial repentance as those I had just witnessed? For my part I felt at the moment that I could gladly have given up all the bishoprics in Christendom for Manon. I asked what course she would recommend in our present emergency. It is requisite, she replied, at all events, to quit the seminary and settle in some safer place. I consented to everything she proposed. She got into her carriage to go and wait for me at the corner of the street. I escaped the next moment,

without attracting the porter's notice. I entered the carriage, and we drove off to a Jew's. I there resumed my lay-dress and sword. Manon furnished the supplies, for I was without a *sou,* and fearing that I might meet with some new impediment, she would not consent to my returning to my room at St. Sulpice for my purse. My finances were in truth wretchedly low, and hers more than sufficiently enriched by the liberality of M. de B——, to make her think lightly of my loss. We consulted together at the Jew's as to the course we should now adopt.

In order to enhance the sacrifice she had made for me of her late lover, she determined to treat him without the least ceremony. I shall leave him all his furniture, she said; it belongs to him; but I shall assuredly carry off, as I have a right to do, the jewels, and about sixty thousand francs, which I have had from him in the last two years. I have given him no control over me, she added, so that we may remain without apprehension in Paris, taking a convenient house, where we shall live, oh how happily together!

I represented to her that, although there might be no danger for her, there was a great deal for me, who must be sooner or later infallibly recognized, and continually exposed to a repetition of the trials I had before endured. She gave me to understand that she could not quit Paris without regret. I had such a dread of giving her annoyance, that there were no risks I would not have encountered for her sake. However, we compromised matters by resolving to take a house in some village near Paris, from whence it would be easy for us to come into town whenever pleasure or business required it. We fixed on Chaillot, which is at a convenient distance. Manon at once returned to her house, and I went to wait for her at a side-gate of the garden of the Tuileries.

She returned an hour after, in a hired carriage, with a servant maid, and several trunks, which contained her dresses, and everything she had of value.

We were not long on our way to Chaillot. We lodged the first night at the inn, in order to have time to find a suitable house, or at least a commodious lodging. We found one to our taste the next morning.

My happiness now appeared to be secured beyond the reach of Fate. Manon was everything most sweet and amiable. She was so delicate and so unceasing in her attentions to me, that I deemed myself but too bountifully re-

warded for all my past troubles. As we had both, by this time, acquired some experience, we discussed rationally the state of our finances. Sixty thousand francs (the amount of our wealth), was not a sum that could be expected to last our whole life; besides, we were neither of us much disposed to control our expenses. Manon's chief virtue assuredly was not economy, any more than it was mine. This was my proposition. Sixty thousand francs, said I, may support us for ten years. Two thousand crowns a year will suffice, if we continue to live at Chaillot. We shall keep up appearances, but live frugally. Our only expense will be occasionally a carriage, and the theaters. We shall do everything in moderation. You like the Opera; we shall go twice a week, in the season. As for play, we shall limit ourselves; so that our losses must never exceed three crowns. It is impossible but that in the space of ten years, some change must occur in my family: my father is even now of an advanced age; he may die; in which event I must inherit a fortune, and we shall then be above all other fears.

This arrangement would not have been by any means the most silly act of my life, if we had only been prudent enough to persevere in its execution; but our resolutions hardly lasted longer than a month. Manon's passion was for amusement; she was the only object of mine. New temptations to expense constantly presented themselves, and far from regretting the money which she sometimes prodigally lavished, I was the first to procure for her everything likely to afford her pleasure. Our residence at Chaillot began even to appear tiresome.

Winter was approaching, and the whole world returning to town; the country had a deserted look. She proposed to me to take a house in Paris. I did not approve of this; but, in order partly at least to satisfy her, I said that we might hire furnished apartments, and that we might sleep there whenever we were late in quitting the assembly, whither we often went; for the inconvenience of returning so late to Chaillot was her excuse for wishing to leave it. We had thus two dwellings, one in town and the other in the country. This change soon threw our affairs into confusion, and led to two adventures, which eventually caused our ruin.

Manon had a brother in the Guards. He unfortunately lived in the very street in which we had taken lodgings. He one day recognized his sister at the window, and hastened over to us. He was a fellow of the rudest manners, and

without the slightest principle of honor. He entered the room swearing in the most horrible way; and as he knew part of his sister's history, he loaded her with abuses and reproaches.

I had gone out the moment before, which was doubtless fortunate for either him or me, for I was little disposed to brook an insult. I only returned to the lodgings after he had left them. The low spirits in which I found Manon convinced me at once that something extraordinary had occurred. She told me of the provoking scene she had just gone through, and of the brutal threats of her brother. I felt such indignation, that I wished to proceed at once to avenge her, when she entreated me with tears to desist.

While we were still talking of the adventure, the guardsman again entered the room in which we sat, without even waiting to be announced. Had I known him, he should not have met from me as civil a reception as he did; but saluting us with a smile upon his countenance, he addressed himself to Manon, and said, he was come to make excuses for his violence; that he had supposed her to be living a life of shame and disgrace, and it was this notion that excited his rage; but having since made inquiry from one of our servants, he had learned such a character of me, that his only wish was now to be on terms with us both.

Although this admission, of having gone for information to one of my own servants, had in it something ludicrous as well as indelicate, I acknowledged his compliments with civility. I thought by doing so to please Manon, and I was not deceived—she was delighted at the reconciliation. We made him stay to dine with us.

In a little time he became so familiar, that hearing us speak of our return to Chaillot, he insisted on accompanying us. We were obliged to give him a seat in our carriage. This was in fact putting him into possession, for he soon began to feel so much pleasure in our company, that he made our house his home, and made himself in some measure master of all that belonged to us. He called me his brother, and, under the semblance of fraternal freedom, he put himself on such a footing as to introduce all his friends without ceremony into our house at Chaillot, and there entertain them at our expense. His magnificent uniforms were procured of my tailor and charged to me, and he even contrived to make Manon and me responsible for all his debts. I pretended to be blind to this system of tyranny, *rather than annoy* Manon, and even to take no notice of the

sums of money which from time to time he received from her. No doubt, as he played very deep, he was honest enough to repay her a part sometimes, when luck turned in his favor; but our finances were utterly inadequate to supply, for any length of time, demands of such magnitude and frequency.

I was on the point of coming to an understanding with him, in order to put an end to the system, when an unfortunate accident saved me that trouble, by involving us in inextricable ruin.

One night we stopped at Paris to sleep, as it had now indeed become our constant habit. The servant maid, who on such occasions remained alone at Chaillot, came early the next morning to inform me that our house had taken fire in the night, and that the flames had been extinguished with great difficulty. I asked whether the furniture had suffered. She answered that there had been such confusion, owing to the multitude of strangers who came to offer assistance, that she could hardly ascertain what damage had been done. I was principally uneasy about our money, which had been locked up in a little box. I went off in haste to Chaillot. Vain hope! the box had disappeared!

I discovered that one could love money without being a miser. This loss afflicted me to such a degree that I was almost out of my mind. I saw at one glance to what new calamities I should be exposed; poverty was the least of them. I knew Manon thoroughly; I had already had abundant proof that, although faithful and attached to me under happier circumstances, she could not be depended upon in want: pleasure and plenty she loved too well to sacrifice them for my sake. I shall lose her! I cried; miserable Chevalier! you are about then to lose all that you love on earth! This thought agitated me to such a degree that I actually for some moments considered whether it would not be best for me to end at once all my miseries by death. I however preserved presence of mind enough to reflect whether I was entirely without resource, and an idea occurred to me which quieted my despair. It would not be impossible, I thought, to conceal our loss from Manon; and I might perhaps discover some ways and means of supplying her, so as to ward off the inconveniences of poverty.

I had calculated, thought I, in endeavoring to comfort *myself, that* twenty thousand crowns would support us *for ten years.* Suppose that these ten years had now elapsed,

and that none of the events which I had looked for in my family had occurred, what then would have been my course? I hardly know; but whatever I should then have done, why may I not do now? How many are there in Paris, who have neither my talents, nor the natural advantages I possess: and who, notwithstanding, owe their support to the exercise of their talents, such as they are.

Has not Providence, I added, while reflecting on the different conditions of life, arranged things wisely? The greater number of the powerful and the rich are fools. No one who knows anything of the world can doubt that. How admirable is the compensating justice thereof! If wealth brought with it talent also, the rich would be too happy, and other men too wretched. To these latter are given personal advantages and genius, to help them out of misery and want. Some of them share the riches of the wealthy by administering to their pleasures, or by making them their dupes; others afford them instruction, and endeavor to make them decent members of society: to be sure, they do not always succeed: but that was probably not the intention of the divine wisdom. In every case they derive a benefit from their labors by living at the expense of their pupils; and, in whatever point of view it is considered, the follies of the rich are a bountiful source of revenue to the humbler classes.

These thoughts restored me a little to my spirits and to my reason. I determined first to consult M. Lescaut, the brother of Manon. He knew Paris perfectly; and I had too many opportunities of learning that it was neither from his own estates, or from the king's pay, that he derived the principal portion of his income. I had about thirty-three crowns left, which I fortunately happened to have about me. I showed him my purse, and explained to him my misfortune and my fears, and then asked him whether I had any alternative between starvation and blowing out my brains in despair. He coolly replied that suicide was the resource of fools. As to dying of want there were hundreds of men of genius who found themselves reduced to that state when they would not employ their talents; that it was for myself to discover what I was capable of doing, and he told me to reckon upon his assistance and his advice in any enterprise I might undertake.

Vague enough, M. Lescaut! said I to him: my wants demand a more speedy remedy; for what am I to say to *Manon? Apropos* of Manon, replied he, what is it that

annoys you about her? Cannot you always find in her wherewithal to meet your wants, when you wish it? Such a person ought to support us all, you and me as well as herself. He cut short the answer which I was about to give to such unfeeling and brutal impertinence, by going on to say, that before night he would ensure me a thousand crowns to divide between us, if I would only follow his advice; that he was acquainted with a nobleman, who was so liberal in affairs of the kind, that he was certain he would not hesitate for a moment to give the sum named for the favors of such a girl as Manon.

I stopped him. I had a better opinion of you, said I; I had imagined that your motive for bestowing your friendship upon me was very different indeed from the one you now betray. With the greatest effrontery he acknowledged that he had been always of the same mind, and that his sister having once sacrificed her virtue, though it might be to the man she most loved, he would never have consented to a reconciliation with her, but with the hope of deriving some advantage from her past misconduct.

It was easy to see that we had been hitherto his dupes. Notwithstanding the disgust with which his proposition inspired me, still, as I felt that I had occasion for his services, I said with apparent complacency, that we ought only to entertain such a plan as a last resource. I begged of him to suggest some other.

He proposed to me to turn my youth and the good looks Nature had bestowed upon me to some account, by establishing a liaison with some generous old dame. This was just as little to my taste, for it would necessarily have rendered me unfaithful to Manon.

I mentioned play as the easiest scheme, and the most suitable to my present situation. He admitted that play certainly was a resource, but that it was necessary to consider the point well. Mere play, said he, with its ordinary chances, is the certain road to ruin; and as for attempting, alone and without an ally, to employ the little means an adroit man has for correcting the vagaries of luck, it would be too dangerous an experiment. There was, he stated, a third course, which was to enter into what he called a *partnership;* but he feared his confederates would consider my youth an objection to my admittance. He however promised to use his influence with them; and, what was more than I expected at his hands, he said that he would supply me with a little money whenever I had pressing occasion fo

any. The only favor I then asked of him was to say nothing to Manon of the loss I had experienced, nor of the subject of our conversation.

I certainly derived little comfort from my visit to Lescaut; I felt even sorry for having confided my secret to him: not a single thing had he done for me that I might not just as well have done for myself, without troubling him; and I could not help dreading that he would violate his promise to keep the secret from Manon. I had also reason to apprehend, from his late avowals, that he might form the design of making use of her for his own vile purposes, or at least of advising her to quit me for some happier and more wealthy lover. This idea brought in its train a thousand reflections, which had no other effect than to torment me, and throw me again into the state of despair in which I had passed the morning. It occurred to me, more than once, to write to my father; and to pretend a new reformation, in order to obtain some pecuniary assistance from him; but I could not forget that, notwithstanding all his natural love and affection for me, he had shut me up for six months in a confined room for my first transgression; and I was certain that, after the scandalous sensation caused by my flight from St. Sulpice, he would be sure to treat me with infinitely more rigor now.

At length out of this chaos of fancies came an idea that all at once restored ease to my mind, and which I was surprised at not having hit upon sooner: this was, to go again to my friend Tiberge, in whom I might be always sure of finding the same unfailing zeal and friendship. There is nothing more glorious—nothing that does more honor to true virtue—than the confidence with which one approaches a friend of tried integrity; no apprehension, no risk of unkind repulse; if it be not always in his power to afford the required succor, one is sure at least of meeting kindness and compassion. The heart of the poor suplicant, which remains impenetrably closed to the rest of the world, opens in his presence, as a flower expands before the orb of day, from which it instinctively knows it can derive a cheering and benign influence only.

I considered it a blessing to have thought so *apropos* of Tiberge, and resolved to take measures to find him before evening. I returned at once to my lodgings to write him a line, and fix a convenient place for our meeting. I requested secrecy and discretion, as the most important service he could render me under present circumstances.

The pleasure I derived from the prospect of seeing Tiberge dissipated every trace of melancholy, which Manon would not have failed otherwise to detect in my countenance. I described our misfortune at Chaillot as a trifle which ought not to annoy her; and Paris being the spot she liked best in the world, she was not sorry to hear me say that it would be necessary for us to remain there entirely, until the little damage was repaired which had been caused by the fire at Chaillot.

In an hour I received an answer from Tiberge, who promised to be at the appointed rendezvous. I went there punctually. I certainly felt some shame at encountering a friend, whose presence alone ought to be a reproach to my iniquities; but I was supported by the opinion I had of the goodness of his heart, as well as by my anxiety about Manon.

I had begged of him to meet me in the garden of the Palais Royal. He was there before me. He hastened towards me the moment he saw me approach, and shook me warmly by both hands. I said that I could not help feeling perfectly ashamed to meet him, and that I was weighed down by a sense of my ingratitude; that the first thing I implored of him was to tell me whether I might still consider him my friend, after having so justly incurred the loss of his esteem and affection. He replied, in the kindest possible manner, that it was not in the nature of things to destroy his regard for me; that my misfortunes even, or, if he might so call them, my faults and transgressions, had but increased the interest he felt for me; but that he must confess his affection was not unalloyed by a sentiment of the liveliest sorrow, such as a person may be supposed to feel at seeing a beloved object on the brink of ruin, and beyond the reach of his assistance.

We sat down upon a bench. Alas! said I with a deep sigh, your compassion must be indeed great, my dear Tiberge, if you assure me it is equal to my sufferings. I am almost ashamed to recount them, for I confess they have been brought on by no very creditable course of conduct; the results, however, are so truly melancholy, that a friend even less attached than you would be affected by the recital.

He then begged of me, in proof of friendship, to let him know, without any disguise, all that had occurred to me since my departure from St. Sulpice. I gratified him; and so far from concealing anything, or attempting to extenuate

my faults, I spoke of my passion with all the ardor with which it still inspired me. I represented it to him as one of those especial visitations of fate, which draw on the devoted victim to his ruin, and which it is as impossible for virtue itself to resist, as for human wisdom to foresee. I painted to him, in the most vivid colors, my excitement, my fears, the state of despair in which I had been two hours before I saw him, and into which I should be again plunged, if I found my friends as relentless as Fate had been. I at length made such an impression upon poor Tiberge, that I saw he was as much affected by compassion, as I by the recollection of my sufferings.

He took my hand, and exhorted me to have courage and be comforted; but, as he seemed to consider it settled that Manon and I were to separate, I gave him at once to understand that it was that very separation I considered as the most intolerable of all my misfortunes; and that I was ready to endure not only the last degree of misery, but death itself, of the cruellest kind, rather than seek relief in a remedy worse than the whole accumulation of my woes.

Explain yourself, then, said he to me; what assistance can I afford you, if you reject everything I propose? I had not courage to tell him that it was from his purse I wanted relief. He however comprehended it in the end; and acknowledging that he believed he now understood me, he remained for a moment in an attitude of thought, with the air of a person revolving something in his mind. Do not imagine, he presently said, that my hesitation arises from any diminution of my zeal and friendship; but to what an alternative do you now reduce me, since I must either refuse you the assistance you ask, or violate my most sacred duty in affording it? For is it not participating in your sin to furnish you with the means of continuing its indulgence?

However, continued he, after a moment's thought, it is perhaps the excited state into which want has thrown you, that denies you now the liberty of choosing the proper path. Man's mind must be at rest, to know the luxury of wisdom and virtue. I can afford to let you have some money, and permit me, my dear chevalier, to impose but one condition: that is, that you let me know the place of your abode, and allow me the opportunity of using my exertions to reclaim you. I know that there is in your heart a love of virtue, and that you have been only led astray by the violence of your passions.

I of course agreed to everything he asked, and only begged of him to deplore the malign destiny which rendered me callous to the counsels of so virtuous a friend. He then took me to a banker of his acquaintance, who gave one hundred and seventy crowns for his note of hand, which was taken as cash. I have already said that he was not rich. His living was worth about six thousand francs a year, but as this was the first year since his induction, he had as yet touched none of the receipts, and it was out of the future income that he made me this advance.

I felt the full force of his generosity, even to such a degree as almost to deplore the fatal passion which thus led me to break through all the restraints of duty. Virtue had for a moment the ascendancy in my heart, and made me sensible of my shame and degradation. But this was soon over. For Manon I could have given up my hopes of heaven, and when I again found myself at her side, I wondered how I could for an instant have considered myself degraded by my passion for this enchanting girl.

Manon was a creature of most extraordinary disposition. Never had mortal a greater contempt for money, and yet she was haunted by perpetual dread of wanting it. Her only desire was for pleasure and amusement. She would never have wished to possess a *sou*, if pleasure could be procured without money. She never even cared what our purse contained, provided she could pass the day agreeably; so that, being neither fond of play, nor at all dazzled by the desire of great wealth, nothing was more easy than to satisfy her, by daily finding out amusements suited to her moderate wishes. But it became by habit a thing so absolutely necessary for her to have her mind thus occupied, that, without it, it was impossible to exercise the smallest influence over her temper or inclinations. Although she loved me tenderly, and I was the only person, as she often declared, in whose society she could ever find the pure enjoyments of love, yet I felt thoroughly convinced that her attachment could not withstand certain apprehensions. She would have preferred me, even with a moderate fortune, to the whole world; but I had no kind of doubt that she would, on the other hand, abandon me for some new M. de B——, when I had nothing more to offer her than fidelity and love.

I resolved therefore so to curtail my own individual expenses, as to be able always to meet hers, and rather to deprive myself of a thousand necessaries than even to limit

her extravagance. The carriage made me more uneasy than anything else, for I saw no chance of being able to maintain either coachman or horses.

I told M. Lescaut of my difficulties, and did not conceal from him that I had received a thousand francs from a friend. He repeated, that if I wished to try the chances of the gaming table, he was not without hopes that, by spending a few crowns in entertaining his associates, I might be, on his recommendation, admitted into the association. With all my repugnance to cheating, I yielded to dire necessity.

Lescaut presented me that night as a relation of his own. He added, that I was the more likely to suceed in my new profession, from wanting the favors of Fortune. However, to show them that I was not quite reduced to the lowest ebb, he said it was my intention to treat them with a supper. The offer was accepted, and I entertained them *en prince*. They talked a good deal about my fashionable appearance and the apparent amiability of my disposition; they said that the best hopes might be entertained of me, because there was something in my countenance that bespoke the gentleman, and no one therefore could have a suspicion of my honesty: they voted thanks to Lescaut for having introduced so promising a novice, and deputed one of the members to instruct me for some days in the necessary manœuvers.

The principal scene of my exploits was the Hotel of Transylvania, where there was a faro table in one room, and other games of cards and dice in the gallery. This *academy* was kept by the Prince of R——, who then lived at Clagny, and most of his officers belonged to our society. Shall I mention it to my shame? I profited quickly by my instructor's tuition. I acquired an amazing facility in sleight-of-hand tricks, and learned in perfection to *sauter le coup*; with the help of a pair of long ruffles, I shuffled so adroitly as to defy the quickest observer, and I ruined several fair players. My unrivalled skill so quickened the progress of my fortunes, that I found myself master, in a few weeks, of very considerable sums, besides what I divided in good faith with my companions.

I had no longer any fear of communicating to Manon the extent of our loss at Chaillot, and, to console her on the announcement of such disastrous news, I took a furnished house, where we established ourselves in all the pride of opulence and security.

Tiberge was in the habit at this period of paying me

frequent visits. He was never tired of his moral lectures. Over and over again did he represent to me the injury I was inflicting upon my conscience, my honor, and my fortune. I received all his advice kindly, and although I had not the smallest inclination to adopt it, I had no doubt of its sincerity, for I knew its source. Sometimes I rallied him good-humoredly, and entreated him not to be more tight-laced than some other priests were, and even bishops, who by no means considered a mistress incompatible with a good and holy life. Look, I said, at Manon's eyes, and tell me if there is one in the long catalogue of sins that might not there find a plea of justification. He bore these sallies patiently, and carried his forbearance almost too far; but when he saw my funds increase, and that I had not only returned him the hundred and seventy crowns, but having hired a new house and trebled my expenses, I had plunged deeper than ever into a life of pleasure, he changed his tone and manner towards me. He lamented my obduracy. He warned me against the chastisements of the Divine wrath, and predicted some of the miseries with which indeed I was shortly afterwards visited. It is impossible, he said, that the money which now serves to support your debaucheries can have been acquired honorably. You have come by it unjustly, and in the same way shall it be taken from you. The most awful punishment Heaven could inflict would be to allow you the undisturbed enjoyment of it. All my advice, he added, has been useless; I too plainly perceive that it will shortly become troublesome to you. I now take my leave; you are a weak, as well as an ungrateful friend! May your criminal enjoyments vanish as a shadow! may your ill-gotten wealth leave you without a resource; and may you yourself remain alone and deserted, to learn the vanity of these things, which now divert you from better pursuits! When that time arrives you will find me disposed to love and to serve you; this day ends our intercourse, and I once for all avow my horror of the life you are leading.

It was in my room and in Manon's presence that he delivered this apostolical harangue. He rose to depart. I was about to detain him, but was prevented by Manon, who said it was better to let the madman go.

What he said, however, did not fail to make some impression upon me. I notice these brief passages of my life when I experienced a returning sentiment of virtue, because it was to those traces, however light, that I was

afterwards indebted for whatever of fortitude I displayed under the most trying circumstances.

Manon's caresses soon dissipated the annoyance this scene had caused me. We continued to lead a life entirely devoted to pleasure and love. The increase of our wealth only redoubled our affection. There were none happier among all the devotees of Venus and Fortune. Heavens! why call this a world of misery, when it can furnish a life of such rapturous enjoyment? But alas, it is too soon over! For what ought Man to sigh, could such felicity but last for ever? Ours shared the common fate,—in being of short duration, and followed by lasting regrets.

I had realized by play such a considerable sum of money, that I thought of investing a portion of it. My servants were not ignorant of my good luck, particularly my valet and Manon's own maid, before whom we often talked without any reserve. The maid was handsome, and my valet in love with her. They knew they had to deal with a young and inexperienced couple, whom they fancied they could impose upon without much difficulty. They laid a plan, and executed it with so much skill, that they reduced us to a state from which it was never afterwards possible for us to extricate ourselves.

Having supped one evening at Lescaut's, it was about midnight when we returned home. I asked for my valet, and Manon for her maid; neither one nor the other could be found. They had not been seen in the house since eight o'clock, and had gone out, after having some cases carried before them, according to orders which they pretended to have received from me. I at once foresaw a part of the truth, but my suspicions were infinitely surpassed by what presented itself on going into my room. The lock of my closet had been forced, and my cash as well as my best clothes were gone. While I stood stupefied with amazement, Manon came, in the greatest alarm, to inform me that her apartment had been rifled in the same manner.

This blow was so perfectly astounding, so cruel, that it was with difficulty I could refrain from tears. The dread of infecting Manon with my despair made me assume a more contented air. I said, smiling, that I should avenge myself upon some unhappy dupe at the Hotel of Transylvania. However, she appeared so sensibly affected, that her grief increased my sorrow infinitely more than my attempt succeeded in supporting her spirits. We are destroyed! said she, with tears in her eyes. I endeavored,

in vain, by my entreaties and caresses, to console her. My own lamentations betrayed my distress and despair. In fact, we were so completely ruined, that we were bereft almost of decent covering.

I determined to send off at once for Lescaut. He advised me to go immediately to the Lieutenant of Police, and to give information also to the Grand Provost of Paris. I went, but it was to add to my calamities only; for, independently of my visit producing not the smallest good effect, I by my absence, allowed Lescaut time for discussion with his sister, during which he did not fail to inspire her with the most horrible resolutions. He spoke to her about M. G—— M——, an old voluptuary, who paid prodigally for his pleasures; he so glowingly described the advantages of such a connection, that she entered into all his plans. This discreditable arrangement was all concluded before my return, and the execution of it only postponed till the next morning, after Lescaut should have apprised G—— M——.

I found him on my return, waiting for me at my house; but Manon had retired to her own apartment, and she had desired the footman to tell me that, having need of repose, she hoped she should not be disturbed that night. Lescaut left me, after offering me a few crowns, which I accepted.

It was nearly four o'clock when I retired to bed; and having evolved in my mind various schemes for retrieving my fortunes, I fell asleep so late that I did not awake till between eleven and twelve o'clock. I arose at once to inquire after Manon's health; they told me that she had gone out an hour before with her brother, who had come for her in a hired carriage. Although there appeared something mysterious in such a proceeding, I endeavored to check my rising suspicions. I allowed some hours to pass, during which I amused myself with reading. At length, being unable any longer to stifle my uneasiness, I paced up and down the apartments. A sealed letter upon Manon's table at last caught my eye. It was addressed to me, and in her handwriting. I felt my blood freeze as I opened it; it was in these words:

"I protest to you, dearest chevalier, that you are the idol of my heart, and that you are the only being on earth whom I can truly love; but do you not see, my own poor *dear chevalier,* that in the situation to which we are now *reduced, fidelity* would be worse than madness? Do you

think tenderness possibly compatible with starvation? For my part, hunger would be sure to drive me to some fatal end. Heaving some day a sigh for love, I should find it was my last. I adore you, rely upon that; but leave to me, for a short while, the management of our fortunes. God help the man who falls into my hands. My only wish is to render my chevalier rich and happy. My brother will tell you about me; he can vouch for my grief in yielding to the necessity of parting from you."

I remained, after reading this, in a state which it would be difficult to describe; for even now I know not the nature of the feelings which then agitated me. It was one of those unique situations of which others can never have experienced anything even approaching to similarity. It is impossible to explain it, because other persons can have no idea of its nature; and one can hardly even analyze it to oneself. Memory furnishes nothing that will connect it with the past, and therefore ordinary language is inadequate to describe it. Whatever was its nature, however, it is certain that grief, hate, jealousy, and shame entered into its composition. Fortunate would it have proved for me if Love also had not been a component part!

That she loves me, I exclaimed, I can believe; but could she, without being a monster, hate me? What right can man ever have to woman's affections, which I had not to Manon's? What is left to me, after all the sacrifices I have made for her sake? Yet she abandons me, and the ungrateful creature thinks to screen herself from my reproaches by professions of love! She pretends to dread starvation! God of Love, what grossness of sentiment! What an answer to the refinement of my adoration! I had no dread of that kind; I, who have almost sought starvation for her sake, by renouncing fortune and the comforts of my father's house! I, who denied myself actual necessaries, in order to gratify her little whims and caprices! She adores me, she says. If you adored me, ungrateful creature, I well know what course you would have taken; you would never have quitted me, at least, without saying adieu. It is only I who can tell the pangs and torments of being separated from all one loves. I must have taken leave of my senses, to have voluntarily brought all this misery upon myself.

My lamentations were interrupted by a visit I little expected: it was from Lescaut. Assassin! cried I, putting my hand upon my sword, where is Manon? what have yo

done with her? My agitation startled him. He replied, that if this was the reception he was to meet when he came to offer me the most essential service it was in his power to render me, he should take his leave, and never again cross my threshold. I ran to the door of the apartment, which I shut. Do not imagine, I said, turning towards him, that you can once more make a dupe of me with your lies and inventions. Either defend your life or tell me where I can find Manon. How impatient you are! replied he; that was in reality the object of my visit. I came to announce a piece of good fortune which you little expected, and for which you will probably feel somewhat grateful. My curiosity was at once excited.

He informed me that Manon, totally unable to endure the dread of want, and, above all, the certainty of being at once obliged to dispense with her equipage, had begged of him to make her acquainted with M. G—— M——, who had a character for liberality. He carefully avoided telling me that this was the result of his own advice, and that he had prepared the way before he introduced his sister. I took her there this morning, said he, and the fellow was so enchanted with her looks that he at once invited her to accompany him to his country seat, where he is gone to pass some days. As I plainly perceived, said Lescaut, the advantage it may be to you, I took care to let him know that she had lately experienced very considerable losses; and I so piqued his generosity that he began by giving her four hundred crowns. I told him that was well enough for a commencement, but that my sister would have, for the future, many demands for money; that she had the charge of a young brother, who had been thrown upon her hands since the death of our parents; and that, if he wished to prove himself worthy of her affections, he would not allow her to suffer uneasiness on account of this child whom she regarded as part of herself. This speech produced its effect; he at once promised to take a house for you and Manon, for you must know that you are the poor little orphan. He undertook to set you up in furniture, and to give you four hundred livres a month, which, if I calculate rightly, will amount to four thousand eight hundred per annum. He left orders with his steward to look out for a house, and to have it in readiness by the time he returned. You will soon, therefore, again see Manon, who begged of me to give you a thousand tender messages, and to assure you that she loves you more dearly than ever.

CHAPTER V

"Infected with that leprosy of lust
Which taints the hoariest years of vicious men;
Making them ransack to the very last
The dregs of pleasure for their vanish'd joys."
—BYRON.

ON sitting down to reflect upon this strange turn of Fate, I found myself so perplexed, and consequently so incapable of arriving at any rational conclusion, that I allowed Lescaut to put repeated questions to me without in the slightest degree attending to their purport. It was then that Honor and Virtue made me feel the most poignant remorse, and that I recalled with bitterness Amiens, my father's house, St. Sulpice, and every spot where I had ever lived in happy innocence. By what a terrific interval was I now separated from that blessed state! I beheld it no longer but as a dim shadow in the distance, still attracting my regrets and desires, but without the power of rousing me to exertion. By what fatality, said I, have I become thus degraded? Love is not a guilty passion! why then has it been to me the source of profligacy and distress? Who prevented me from leading a virtuous and tranquil life with Manon? Why did I not marry her before I obtained any concession from her love? Would not my father, who had the tenderest regard for me, have given his consent, if I had taken the fair and candid course of soliciting him? Yes, my father would himself have cherished her as one far too good to be his son's wife! I should have been happy in the love of Manon, in the affection of my father, in the esteem of the world, with a moderate portion of the good things of life, and above all, with the consciousness of virtue. Disastrous change! Into what an infamous character is it here proposed that I should sink? To share——But can I hesitate, if Manon herself suggests it, and if I am to lose her except upon such conditions? Lescaut, said I, putting my hands to my eyes as if to shut out such a horrifying vision, if your intention was to render me a service, I give you thanks. You might perhaps have struck out a more rep-

utable course, but it is so settled, is it not? Let us then only think of profiting by your labor, and fulfilling your engagements.

Lescaut, who had been considerably embarrassed, not only by my fury, but by the long silence which followed it, was too happy to see me now take a course so different from what he had anticipated. He had not a particle of courage, of which indeed I have, in the sequel of my story, abundant proof. Yes, yes, he quickly answered, it is good service I have rendered you, and you will find that we shall derive infinitely more advantage from it than you now expect. We consulted then as to the best mode of preventing the suspicions which G—— M—— might entertain of our relationship, when he found me older and of riper manhood than he probably imagined. The only plan we could hit upon was to assume in his presence an innocent and provincial air, and to persuade him that it was my intention to enter the Church, and that with that view I was obliged to go every day to the College. We also determined that I should appear as awkward as I possibly could the first time I was admitted to the honor of an introduction.

He returned to town three or four days after, and at once conducted Manon to the house which his steward had in the meantime prepared. She immediately apprised Lescaut of her return, and he having informed me, we went together to her new abode. The old lover had already gone out.

In spite of the submission with which I had resigned myself to her wishes, I could not, at our meeting, repress the compunctious murmurs of my conscience. I appeared before her grieved and dejected. The joy I felt at seeing her once more could not altogether dispel my sorrow for her infidelity: she, on the contrary, appeared transported with the pleasure of seeing me. She accused me of coldness. I could not help muttering the words perfidious and unfaithful, though they were profusely mixed with sighs.

At first she laughed at me for my simplicity; but when she found that I continued to look at her with an unchanging expression of melancholy, and that I could not bring myself to enter with alacrity into a scene so repugnant to all my feelings, she went alone into her boudoir. I very soon followed her, and then I found her in a flood of tears. I asked the cause of her sorrow. You can easily *understand it,* said she; how can you wish me to live, if *my presence* can no longer have any other effect, than

to give you an air of sadness and chagrin? Not one kiss have you given me during the long hour you have been in the house, while you have received my caresses with the dignified indifference of a Grand Turk, receiving the forced homage of the Sultanas of his harem.

Hearken to me, Manon, said I, embracing her; I cannot conceal from you that my heart is bitterly afflicted. I do not now allude to the uneasiness your sudden flight caused me, nor to the unkindness of quitting me without a word of consolation, after having passed the night away from me. The pleasure of seeing you again would more than compensate for all; but do you imagine that I can reflect without sighs and tears upon the degrading and unhappy life which you now wish me to lead in this house? Say nothing of my birth, or of my feelings of honor; love like mine derives no aid from arguments of that feeble nature; but do you imagine that I can without emotion see my love so badly recompensed, or rather so cruelly treated, by an ungrateful and unfeeling mistress?

She interrupted me. Stop, Chevalier, said she, it is useless to torture me with reproaches, which, coming from you, always pierce my heart. I see what annoys you. I had hoped that you would have agreed to the project which I had devised for mending our shattered fortunes, and it was from a feeling of delicacy to you that I began the execution of it without your assistance; but I give it up since it does not meet your approbation. She added that she would now merely request a little patient forbearance during the remainder of the day; that she had already received five hundred crowns from the old gentleman, and that he had promised to bring her that evening a magnificent pearl necklace with other jewels, and, in advance, half of the yearly pension he had engaged to allow her. Leave me only time enough, said she to me, to get possession of these presents; I promised you that he will have little to boast of from his connection with me, for in the country I repulsed all his advances, putting him off till our return to town. It is true that he has kissed my hand a thousand times over, and it is but just that he should pay for even this amusement: I am sure that, considering his riches as well as his age, five or six thousand francs is not an unreasonable price!

Her determination was of more value in my eyes than twenty thousand crowns. I could feel that I was not yet bereft of every sentiment of honor, by the satisfaction I

experienced at escaping thus from infamy. But I was born for brief joys, and miseries of long duration. Fate never rescued me from one precipice, but to lead me to another. When I had expressed my delight to Manon at this change in her intentions, I told her she had better inform Lescaut of it, in order that we might take our measures in concert. At first he murmured, but the money in hand induced him to enter into our views. It was then determined that we should all meet at G—— M——'s supper table, and that, for two reasons: first, for the amusement of passing me off as a school-boy and brother to Manon; and secondly, to prevent the old profligate from taking any liberties with his mistress, on the strength of his liberal payments in advance. Lescaut and I were to retire, when he went to the room where he expected to pass the night; and Manon, instead of following him, promised to come out, and join us. Lescaut undertook to have a coach waiting at the door.

The supper hour having arrived, M. de G—— M—— made his appearance. Already Lescaut was with his sister in the supper room. The moment the lover entered, he presented his fair one with a complete set of pearls, necklace, earrings, and bracelets, which must have cost at least a thousand crowns. He then placed on the table before her, in louis d'or, two thousand four hundred francs, the half of her year's allowance. He seasoned his present with many pretty speeches in the true style of the old court. Manon could not refuse him a few kisses: it was sealing her right to the money which he had just handed to her. I was at the door, and waiting for Lescaut's signal to enter the room.

He approached to take me by the hand, while Manon was securing the money and jewels, and leading me toward M. de G—— M——, he desired me to make my bow. I made two or three most profound ones. Pray excuse him, sir, said Lescaut, he is a mere child. He has not yet acquired much of the *ton* of Paris; but no doubt with a little trouble we shall improve him. You will often have the honor of seeing that gentleman here, said he, turning towards me: take advantage of it, and endeavor to imitate so good a model.

The old libertine appeared to be pleased with me. He patted me on the cheek, saying that I was a fine boy, but that I should be on my guard in Paris, where young men were easily debauched. Lescaut assured him that I was naturally of so grave a character that I thought of nothing

but becoming a clergyman, and that, even as a child, my favorite amusement was building little chapels. I fancy a likeness to Manon, said the old gentleman, putting his hand under my chin. I answered him with the most simple air,—Sir, the fact is, that we are very closely connected, and that I love my sister as another portion of myself. Do you hear that? said he to Lescaut; he is indeed a clever boy! It is a pity he should not see something of the world. Oh, sir, I replied, I have seen a great deal of it at home, attending church, and I believe I might find in Paris some greater fools than myself. Listen! said he; it is positively wonderful in a boy from the country.

The whole conversation during supper was of the same kind. Manon, with her usual gaiety, was several times on the point of spoiling the joke by her bursts of laughter. I contrived, while eating, to recount his own identical history, and to paint even the fate that awaited him. Lescaut and Manon were in an agony of fear during my recital, especially while I was drawing his portrait to the life: but his own vanity prevented him from recognizing it, and I did it so well that he was the first to pronounce it extremely laughable. You will allow that I had reason for dwelling on this ridiculous scene.

At length it was time to retire. Lescaut and I took our departure. G—— M—— went to his room, and Manon, making some excuse for her absence, came to join us at the gate. The coach, that was waiting for us a few doors off, drove up towards us, and we were out of the street in an instant.

Although I must confess that this proceeding appeared to me little short of actual robbery, it was not the most dishonest one with which I thought I had to reproach myself. I had more scruples about the money which I had won at play. However, we derived as little advantage from the one as from the other; and Heaven sometimes ordains that the lightest fault shall meet the severest punishment.

M. G—— M—— was not long in finding out that he had been duped. I am not sure whether he took any steps that night to discover us, but he had influence enough to insure an effectual pursuit, and we were sufficiently imprudent to rely upon the extent of Paris, and the distance between our residence and his. Not only did he discover our abode and our circumstances, but also who I was—the life that I had led in Paris—Manon's former connection with B——, the manner in which she had deceived him: in a

word, all the scandalous facts of our history. He therefore resolved to have us apprehended, and treated less as criminals than as vagabonds. An officer came abruptly one morning into our bed-room, with half a dozen archers of the guard. They first took possession of our money, or I should rather say, of G—— M——'s. They made us quickly get up, and conducted us to the door, where we found two coaches, into one of which they forced poor Manon, without any explanation, and I was taken in the other to St. Lazare.

One must have experienced this kind of reverse, to understand the despair that is caused by it. The police were savage enough to deny me the consolation of embracing Manon, or of bidding her farewell. I remained for a long time ignorant of her fate. It was perhaps fortunate for me that I was kept in a state of ignorance, for had I known what she suffered, I should have lost my senses, probably my life.

My unhappy mistress was dragged then from my presence, and taken to a place the very name of which fills me with horror to remember. This to be the lot of a creature the most perfect, who must have shared the most splendid throne on earth, if other men had only seen and felt as I did! She was not treated harshly there, but was shut up in a narrow prison, and obliged, in solitary confinement, to perform a certain quantity of work each day, as a necessary condition for obtaining the most unpalatable food. I did not learn this till a long time after, when I had myself endured some months of rough and cruel treatment.

My guards not having told me where it was that they had been ordered to conduct me, it was only on my arrival at St. Lazare that I learned my destination. I would have preferred death, at that moment, to the state into which I believed myself about to be thrown. I had the utmost terror of this place. My misery was increased by the guards, on my entrance, examining once more my pockets to ascertain whether I had about me any arms or weapons of defense.

The governor appeared. He had been informed of my apprehension. He saluted me with great mildness. Do not, my good sir, said I to him, allow me to be treated with indignity. I would suffer a hundred deaths rather than quietly submit to degrading treatment. No, no, he replied, you will act quietly and prudently, and we shall be

mutually content with each other. He begged of me to ascend to one of the highest rooms; I followed him without a murmur. The archers accompanied us to the door, and the governor, entering the room, made a sign for them to depart.

I am your prisoner, I suppose? said I; well, what do you intend to do with me? He said, he was delighted to see me adopt so reasonable a tone; that it would be his duty to endeavor to inspire me with a taste for virtue and religion, and mine to profit by his exhortations and advice; that lightly as I might be disposed to rate his attentions to me, I should find nothing but enjoyment in my solitude. Ah, enjoyment, indeed; replied I; you do not know, my good sir; the only thing on earth that could afford me enjoyment. I know it, said he, but I trust your inclinations will change. His answer showed that he had heard of my adventures, and perhaps of my name. I begged to know if such were the fact. He told me candidly that they had informed him of every particular.

This blow was the severest of any I had yet experienced. I literally shed a torrent of tears, in all the bitterness of unmixed despair; I could not reconcile myself to the humiliation which would make me a proverb of all my acquaintances, and the disgrace of my family. I passed a week in the most profound dejection, without being capable of gaining any information, or of occupying myself with anything but my own degradation. The remembrance even of Manon added nothing to my grief; it only occurred to me as a circumstance that had preceded my new sorrow; and the sense of shame and confusion was at present the all-absorbing passion.

There are few persons who have experienced the force of these special workings of the mind. The generality of men are only sensible of five or six passions, in the limited round of which they pass their lives, and within which all their agitations are confined. Remove them from the influence of love and hate, pleasure and pain, hope and fear, and they have no further feeling. But persons of a finer cast can be affected in a thousand different ways; it would almost seem that they had more than five senses, and that they are accessible to ideas and sensations which far exceed the ordinary faculties of human nature; and, conscious that they possess a capacity which raises them above the *common herd,* there is nothing of which they are more *jealous.* Hence springs their impatience under contempt

and ridicule; and hence it is that a sense of debasement is perhaps the most violent of all their emotions.

I had this melancholy advantage at St. Lazare. My grief appeared to the governor so excessive, that, dreading the consequences, he thought he was bound to treat me with more mildness and indulgence. He visited me two or three times a day; he often made me take a turn with him in the garden, and showed his interest for me in his exhortations and good advice. I listened always attentively; and warmly expressed my sense of his kindness, from which he derived hopes of my ultimate conversion.

You appear to me, said he one day, of a disposition so mild and tractable, that I cannot comprehend the excesses into which you have fallen. Two things astonish me: one is, how, with your good qualities, you could have ever abandoned yourself to vice; and the other, which amazes me still more, is, how you can receive with such perfect temper my advice and instructions, after having lived so long in a course of debauchery. If it be sincere repentance, you present a singular example of the benign mercy of Heaven; if it proceed from the natural goodness of your disposition, then you certainly have that within you which warrants the hope that a protracted residence in this place will not be required to bring you back to a regular and respectable life.

I was delighted to find that he had such an opinion of me. I resolved to strengthen it by a continuance of good conduct, convinced that it was the surest means of abridging the term of my confinement. I begged of him to furnish me with books. He was agreeably surprised to find that when he requested me to say what I should prefer, I mentioned only some religious and instructive works. I pretended to devote myself assiduously to study, and I thus gave him convincing proof of the moral reformation he was so anxious to bring about.

It was nothing, however, but rank hypocrisy—I blush to confess it. Instead of studying, when alone I did nothing but curse my destiny. I lavished the bitterest execrations on my prison, and the tyrants who detained me there. If I ceased for a moment from these lamentations, it was only to relapse into the tormenting remembrance of my fatal and unhappy love. Manon's absence,—the mystery in which her fate was veiled,—the dread of never again beholding her; these formed the subject of my melancholy thoughts. I fancied her in the arms of G—— M——. Far

from imagining that he could have been brute enough to subject her to the same treatment to which I was condemned, I felt persuaded that he had only procured my removal, in order that he might possess her in undisturbed enjoyment.

Oh! how miserable were the days and nights I thus passed! They seemed to be of endless duration. My only hope of escape, now, was in hypocrisy; I scrutinized the countenance, and carefully marked every observation that fell from the governor, in order to ascertain what he really thought of me; and looking on him as the sole arbiter of my future fate, I made it my study to win, if possible, his favor. I soon had the satisfaction to find that I was firmly established in his good graces, and no longer doubted his disposition to befriend me.

I one day ventured to ask him whether my liberation depended on him. He replied that it was not altogether in his hands, but that he had no doubt that on his representation M. de G—— M——, at whose instance the lieutenant-general of police had ordered me to be confined, would consent to my being set at liberty. May I flatter myself, rejoined I, in the mildest tone, that he will consider two months, which I have now spent in this prison, as a sufficient atonement? He offered to speak to him, if I wished it. I implored him without delay to do me that favor.

He told me two days afterwards that G—— M—— was so sensbly affected by what he had heard, that he not only was ready to consent to my liberation, but that he had even expressed a strong desire to become better acquainted with me, and that he himself purposed to pay me a visit in prison. Although his presence could not afford me much pleasure, I looked upon it as a certain prelude to my liberation.

He accordingly came to St. Lazare. I met him with an air more grave and certainly less silly than I had exhibited at his house with Manon. He spoke reasonably enough of my former bad conduct. He added, as if to excuse his own delinquencies, that it was graciously permitted to the weakness of man to indulge in certain pleasures, but that dishonesty and such shameful practices ought to be, and always would be, inexorably punished.

I listened to all he said with an air of submission, which quite charmed him. I betrayed no symptoms of annoyance even at some jokes in which he indulged about my relationship with Manon and Lescaut, and about the little *chapels of which* he supposed I must have had time to erect

a great many in St. Lazare, as I was so fond of that occupation. But he happened, unluckily both for me and for himself, to add that he hoped Manon had also employed herself in the same edifying manner at the Magdalen. Notwithstanding the thrill of horror I felt at the sound of the name, I had still presence of mind enough to beg, in the gentlest manner, that he would explain himself. Oh, yes! he replied, she has been these last two months at the Magdalen learning to be prudent, and I trust she has improved herself as much there as you have done at St. Lazare!

If an eternal imprisonment, or death itself, had been presented to my view, I could not have restrained the excitement into which this afflicting announcement threw me. I flung myself upon him in so violent a rage that half my strength was exhausted by the effort. I had, however, more than enough left to drag him to the ground and grasp him by the throat. I should infallibly have strangled him, if his fall, and the half-stifled cries which he had still the power to utter, had not attracted the governor and several of the priests to my room. They rescued him from my fury.

I was, myself, breathless and almost impotent from rage. O God! I cried—Heavenly justice! Must I survive this infamy? I tried again to seize the barbarian who had thus roused my indignation—they prevented me. My despair—my cries,—my tears, exceed all belief: I raved in so incoherent a manner that all the bystanders, who were ignorant of the cause, looked at each other with as much dread as surprise.

G—— M—— in the meantime adjusted his wig and cravat, and in his anger at having been so ill-treated, ordered me to be kept under more severe restraint than before, and to be punished in the manner usual with offenders in St. Lazare. No, sir! said the governor, it is not with a person of his birth that we are in the habit of using such means of coercion; besdes, he is habitually so mild and well-conducted, that I cannot but think you must have given provocation for such excessive violence. This reply disconcerted G—— M—— beyond measure, and he went away, declaring that he knew how to be revenged on the governor, as well as on me, and every one else who dared to thwart him.

The Superior, having ordered some of the brotherhood to escort him out of the prison, remained alone with me. He conjured me to tell him at once what was the cause of the fracas.—Oh, my good sir! said I to him, continuing to cry

like a child, imagine the most horrible cruelty, figure to yourself the most inhuman of atrocities—that is what G—— M—— has had the cowardly baseness to perpetrate: he has pierced my heart. Never shall I recover from this blow! I would gladly tell you the whole circumstance, added I, sobbing with grief; you are kind-hearted, and cannot fail to pity me.

I gave him, as briefly as I could, a history of my long-standing and insurmountable passion for Manon, of the flourishing condition of our fortunes previous to the robbery committed by our servants, of the offers which G—— M—— had made to my mistress, of the understanding they had come to, and the manner in which it had been defeated. To be sure, I represented things to him in as favorable a light for us as possible. Now you can comprehend, continued I, the source of M. G—— M——'s holy zeal for my conversion. He has had influence enough to have me shut up here out of mere revenge. That I can pardon; but, my good sir, that is not all. He has taken from me my heart's blood: he has had Manon shamefully incarcerated in the Magdalen; and had the effrontery to announce it to me this day with his own lips. In the Magdalen, good sir! O heavens, my adorable mistress, my beloved Manon, a degraded inmate of the Hospital! How shall I command strength of mind enough to survive this grief and shame!

The good father, seeing me in such affliction, endeavored to console me. He told me that he had never understood my history, as I just now related it; he had of course known that I led a dissolute life, but he had imagined that M. G—— M——'s interest about me was the result of his esteem and friendship for my family; that it was in this sense he had explained the matter to him; that what I had now told him should assuredly produce a change in my treatment, and that he had no doubt that the accurate detail which he should immediately transmit to the lieutenant-general of police, would bring about my liberation.

He then inquired why I had never thought of informing my family of what had taken place, since they had not been instrumental to my incarceration. I satisfactorily answered this by stating my unwillingness to cause my father pain, or to bring upon myself the humiliation of such an exposure. In the end he promised to go directly to the lieutenant-general of police; if it were only, said he, to be beforehand with M. G—— M——, who went off in such a rage, and who has sufficient influence to make himself formidable.

I looked for the good father's return with all the suspense of a man expecting sentence of death. It was torture to me to think of Manon at the Magdalen. Besides the infamy of such a prison, I knew not how she might be treated there; and the recollection of some particulars I had formerly heard of this horrible place, incessantly renewed my misery. Cost what it might, I was so bent upon relieving her by some means or other, that I should assuredly have set fire to St. Lazare, if no other mode of escape had presented itself.

I considered what chances would remain to me if the lieutenant-general still kept me in confinement. I taxed my ingenuity: I scanned every imaginable gleam of hope—I could discover nothing that gave me any prospect of escape, and I feared that I should experience only more rigid confinement, if I made an unsuccessful attempt. I thought of some friends from whom I might hope for aid, but then, how was I to make them aware of my situation? At length I fancied that I had hit upon a plan so ingenious, as to offer a fair probability of success. I postponed the details of its arrangement until after the Superior's return, in case of his having failed in the object of his visit.

He soon arrived: I did not observe upon his countenance any of those marks of joy that indicate good news. I have spoken, said he, to the lieutenant-general of police, but I was too late. M. G—— M—— went straight to him after quitting us, and so prejudiced him against you, that he was on the point of sending me fresh instructions to subject you to closer confinement.

However, when I let him know the truth of your story, he reconsidered the matter, and, smiling at the conduct of old G—— M——, he said it would be necessary to keep you here for six months longer in order to pacify him; the less to be lamented, he added, because your morals would be sure to benefit by your residence here. He desired that I should show you every kindness and attention, and I need not assure you that you shall have no reason to complain of your treatment.

This speech of the Superior's was long enough to afford me time to form a prudent resolution. I saw that by betraying too strong an impatience for my liberty, I should probably be upsetting all my projects. I acknowledged to him, that, as it was necessary for me to remain, it was an infinite comfort to know that I possessed a place in his esteem. I then requested, and with unaffected sincerity, a favor, which could be of no consequence to others, and

which would contribute much to my peace of mind; it was to inform a friend of mine, a devout clergyman, who lived at St. Sulpice, that I was at St. Lazare, and to permit me occasionally to receive his visits.

This was of course my friend Tiberge; not that I could hope from him the assistance necessary for effecting my liberty; but I wished to make him the unconscious instrument of my designs. In a word, this was my project: I wished to write to Lescaut, and to charge him and our common friends with the task of my deliverance. The first difficulty was to have my letter conveyed to him; this should be Tiberge's office. However, as he knew him to be Manon's brother, I doubted whether he would take charge of this commission. My plan was to enclose my letter to Lescaut in another to some respectable man of my acquaintance, begging of him to transmit the first to its address without delay; and as it was necessary that I should have personal communication with Lescaut, in order to arrange our proceedings, I told him to call on me at St. Lazare, and assume the name of my eldest brother, as if he had come to Paris expressly to see me. I postponed till our meeting all mention of the safest and most expeditious course I intended to suggest for our future conduct. The governor informed Tiberge of my wish to see him. This ever-faithful friend had not so entirely lost sight of me as to be ignorant of my present abode, and it is probable that, in his heart, he did not regret the circumstance, from an idea that it might furnish the means of my moral regeneration. He lost no time in paying me the desired visit.

CHAPTER VI

"It is a strange thing to note the excess of this passion; and how it braves the nature and value of things, by this—that the speaking of a perpetual hyperbole is comely in nothing but in Love."—BACON.

MY interview with Tiberge was of the most friendly description. I saw that his object was to discover the present temper of my mind. I opened my heart to him without any reserve, except as to the mere point of my intention of escaping. It is not from such a friend as you, said I, that I can ever wish to dissemble my real feelings. If you flattered yourself with a hope that you were at last about to find me grown prudent and regular in my conduct, a libertine reclaimed by the chastisements of fortune, released alike from the trammels of love, and the dominion that Manon wields over me, I must in candor say, that you deceived yourself. You still behold me, as you left me four months ago, the slave,—if you will, the unhappy slave,—of a passion, from which I now hope, as fervently and as confidently as I ever did, to derive eventually solid comfort.

He answered, that such an acknowledgement rendered me utterly inexcusable; that it was no uncommon case to meet sinners who allowed themselves to be so dazzled with the glare of vice as to prefer it openly to the true splendor of virtue; they were at least deluded by the false image of happiness, the poor dupes of an empty shadow; but to know and feel as I did, that the object of my attachment was only calculated to render me culpable and unhappy, and to continue thus voluntarily in a career of misery and crime, involved a contradiction of ideas and of conduct little creditable to my reason.

Tiberge, replied I, it is easy to triumph when your arguments are unopposed. Allow me to reason for a few moments in my turn. Can you pretend that what you call the happiness of virtue is exempt from troubles, and crosses, and cares? By what name will you designate the dungeon, *the rack,* the inflictions and tortures of tyrants? Will you *say with the Mystics* that the soul derives pleasure from the

torments of the body? You are not bold enough to hold such a doctrine—a paradox not to be maintained. This happiness, then, that you prize so much, has a thousand drawbacks, or is, more properly speaking, but a tissue of sufferings through which one hopes to attain felicity. If by the power of imagination one can even derive pleasure from these sufferings, hoping that they may lead to a happy end, why, let me ask, do you deem my conduct senseless, when it is directed by precisely the same principle? I love Manon: I wade through sorrow and suffering in order to attain happiness with her. My path is one indeed of difficulties, but the mere hope of reaching the desired goal makes it easy and delightful; and I shall think myself but too bountifully repaid by one moment of her society, for all the troubles I encounter in my course. There appears therefore no difference between us, or, if there be any, it is assuredly in my favor; for the bliss I hope for is near and tangible, yours is far distant, and purely speculative. Mine is of the same kind as my sufferings, that is to say, evident to my senses; yours is of an incomprehensible nature, and only discernible through the dim medium of Faith.

Tiberge appeared shocked by my remarks. He retired two or three paces from me, while he said, in the most serious tone, that my argument was not only a violation of good sense, but that it was the miserable sophistry of irreligion; for the comparison, he added, of the pitiful reward of your sufferings with that held out to us by the divine revelation, is the essence of impiety and absurdity combined.

I acknowledge, said I, that the comparison is not a just one, but my argument does not all depend upon it. I was about to explain what you consider a contradiction,—the perservering in a painful pursuit; and I think I have satisfactorily proved, that if there be any contradiction in that, we shall be both equally open to the charge. It was in this light, only, that I could observe no difference in our cases, and I cannot as yet perceive any.

You may probably answer, that the proposed end, the promised reward, of virtue, is infinitely superior to that of love? No one disputes it, but that is not the question—we are only discussing the relative aid they both afford in the endurance of affliction. Judge of that by the practical effect: are there not multitudes who abandon a life of strict virtue? how few give up the pursuits of love!

Again, *you will* reply that if there be difficulties in the *exercise of* virtue, they are by no means universal and

sure; that the good man does not necessarily meet tyrants and tortures, and that, on the contrary, a life of virtue is perfectly compatible with repose and enjoyment. I can say with equal truth, that love is often accompanied by content and happiness; and what makes another distinction of infinite advantage to my argument, I may add that love, though it often deludes, never holds out other than hopes of bliss and joy, whilst religion exacts from her votaries mortification and sorrow.

Do not be alarmed, said I, perceiving that I had almost offended his zealous feelings of devotion. I only wish to say, that there is no more unsuccessful method of weaning man's heart from love, than by endeavoring to decry its enjoyments, and by promising him more pleasure from the exercise of virtue. It is an inherent principle in our nature, that our felicity consists only in pleasure. I defy you to conceive any other notion of it; and it requires little time to arrive at the conviction, that, of all pleasures, those of love are immeasurably the most enchanting. A man quickly discerns the delusion, when he hears the promise made of livelier enjoyment, and the effect of such misrepresentation is only to make him doubt the truth of a more solid promise.

Let the preacher who seeks the reformation of a sinner tell him that virtue is indispensably necessary, but not disguise its difficulty and its attendant denials. Say that the enjoyments of love are fleeting, if you will, that they are rigidly forbidden, that they lead with certainty to eternal suffering; and, what would assuredly make a deeper impression upon me than any other argument, say that the more sweet and delectable they are, the brighter will be the reward of Heaven for giving them up in sacrifice; but do in the name of justice admit, that, constituted as the heart of man is, they form here, on earth, our most perfect happiness.

My last sentence restored to Tiberge his good-humor. He allowed that my ideas were not altogether so unreasonable. The only point he made, was in asking me why I did not carry my own principle into operation, by sacrificing my passion to the hope of that remuneration of which I had drawn so brilliant a picture. O! my dear friend, replied I; that it is which makes me conscious of my own misery and weakness: true, alas! it is indeed my duty to act according to my argument; but have I the power of governing my own actions? What aid will enable me to forget Manon's charms? God forgive me, said Tiberge, I can almost fancy

you a Jansenist. I know not of what sect I am, replied I, nor do I indeed very clearly see to which I ought to belong; but I cannot help feeling the truth of this at least of their tenets.

One effect of our conversation was to revive my friend's pity for me in all its force. He perceived that there was in my errors more of weakness than of vice; and he was the more disposed in the end to give me assistance; without which I should infallibly have perished from distress of mind. However, I carefully concealed from him my intention of escaping from St. Lazare. I merely begged of him to take charge of my letter; I had it ready before he came, and I soon found an excuse for the necessity of writing. He faithfully transmitted it, and Lescaut received before evening the one I had enclosed for him.

He came to see me next morning, and fortunately was admitted under my brother's name. I was overjoyed at finding him in my room. I carefully closed the door. Let us lose no time, I said. First tell me about Manon, and then advise me how I am to shake off these fetters. He assured me that he had not seen his sister since the day before my arrest, and that it was only by repeated inquiries, and after much trouble, that he had at length been able to discover her fate as well as mine; and that he had two or three times presented himself at the Magdalen, and been refused admittance. Wretch! muttered I to myself, dearly shall G—— M—— pay for this!"

As to your escape, continued Lescaut, it will not be so easy as you imagine. Last evening, I and a couple of friends walked round this establishment to reconnoitre it; and we agreed that, as your windows looked into a court surrounded by buildings, as you yourself mentioned in your letter, there would be vast difficulty in getting you out. Besides, you are on the third story, and it would be impossible to introduce ropes or ladders through the window. I therefore see no means from without—in the house itself we must hit upon some scheme.

No, replied I; I have examined everything minutely, particularly since, through the governor's indulgence, my confinement has been less rigorous, I am no longer locked into my room; I have liberty to walk in the gallery; but there is, upon every landing, a strong door kept closed night and day; so that it is impossible that ingenuity alone, unaided by some violent efforts, can rescue me.

Wait, said I, after turning in my mind for a moment an

idea that struck me as excellent; could you bring me a pistol? Softly, said Lescaut to me, you don't think of committing murder? I assured him that I had so little intention of shooting any one, that it would not be even necessary to have the pistol loaded. Bring it to me to-morrow, I added, and do not fail to be exactly opposite the great entrance with two or three of your friends at eleven to-morrow night; I think I shall be able to join you there. He in vain requested me to explain my plan. I told him that such an attempt as I contemplated, could only appear rational after it had succeeded. I begged of him to shorten his visit, in order that he might with the less difficulty be admitted next morning. He was accordingly admitted as readily as on his first visit. He had put on so serious an air, moreover, that a stranger would have taken him for a respectable person.

When I found in my hand the instrument of my liberty, I no longer doubted my success. It was certainly a strange and a bold project; but of what was I not capable, with the motives that inspired me? I had, since I was allowed permission to walk in the galleries, found opportunities of observing that every night the porter brought the keys of all the doors to the governor, and subsequently there always reigned a profound silence in the house, which showed that the inmates had retired to rest. There was an open communication between my room and that of the Superior. My resolution was, if he refused quietly to surrender the keys, to force him, by fear of the pistol, to deliver them up, and then by their help to gain the street. I impatiently awaited the moment of executing my purpose. The porter arrived at his usual time, that is to say, soon after nine o'clock. I allowed an hour to elapse, in order that the priests as well as the servants might be all asleep. I at length proceeded with my pistol and a lighted candle. I first gave a gentle tap at the governor's door to awaken without alarming him. I knocked a second time before he heard me; and supposing of course that it was one of the priests who was taken ill and wanted assistance, he got out of bed, dressed himself, and came to the door. He had, however, the precaution to ask first who it was, and what was wanted? I was obliged to mention my name, but I assumed a plaintive tone, to make him believe that I was indisposed. Ah! it is you, my dear boy, said he on opening the door; what can bring you here at this hour? I stepped inside the door, and leading him to the opposite side of the room, I declared to him that it was absolutely impossible for me to remain longer at Lazare;

that the night was the most favorable time for going out unobserved, and that I confidently expected, from his tried friendship, that he would consent to open the gates for me, or entrust me with the keys to let myself out.

This compliment to his friendship seemed to surprise him. He stood for a few moments looking at me without making any reply. Finding that I had no time to lose, I just begged to assure him that I had the most lively sense of all his kindnesses, but that freedom was dearer to man than every other consideration, especially so to me, who had been cruelly and unjustly deprived of it; that I was resolved this night to recover it, cost what it would, and fearing lest he might raise his voice and call for assistance, I let him see the powerful incentive to silence, which I had kept concealed in my bosom. A pistol! cried he. What! my son! will you take away my life in return for the attentions I have shown you?—God forbid, replied I; you are too reasonable to drive me to that horrible extremity; but I am determined to be free, and so firmly determined, that if you defeat my project, I will put an end to your existence. But, my dear son! said he, pale and frightened, what have I done to you? What reason have you for taking my life? No! replied I, impatiently, I have no design upon your life if you, yourself, wish to live; open but the doors for me, and you will find me the most attached of friends. I perceived the keys upon the table. I requested he would take them in his hand and walk before me, making as little noise as he possibly could.

He saw the necessity of consenting. We proceeded, and as he opened each door, he repeated, always with a sigh, Ah! my son, who could have believed it?—No noise, good father, no noise, I as often answered in my turn. At length we reached a kind of barrier, just inside the great entrance. I already fancied myself free, and kept close behind the governor, with my candle in one hand, and my pistol in the other.

While he was endeavoring to open the heavy gate, one of the servants, who slept in an adjoining room, hearing the noise of the bolts, jumped out of bed, and peeped forth to see what was passing. The good father apparently thought him strong enough to overpower me. He commanded him, most imprudently, to come to his assistance. He was a powerful ruffian, and threw himself upon me without an *instant's hesitation.* There was no time for parleying—I *leveled my pistol* and lodged the contents in his breast.

See, father, of what mischief you have been the cause, said I to my guide; but that must not prevent us from finishing our work, I added, pushing him on towards the last door. He did not dare refuse to open it. I made my exit in perfect safety, and, a few paces off, found Lescaut with two friends waiting for me according to his promise.

We removed at once to a distance. Lescaut inquired whether he had not heard the report of a pistol? You are to blame, said I, why did you bring it charged? I, however, could not help thanking him for having taken this precaution, without which, I doubtless must have continued much longer at St. Lazare. We went to pass the night at a tavern, where I made up, in some degree, for the miserable fare which had been doled out to me for nearly three months. I was very far, however, from tasting perfect enjoyment; Manon's sufferings were mine. She must be released, said I to my companions: this was my sole object in desiring my own liberty. I rely on your aiding me with all your ingenuity; as for myself, my life shall be devoted to the purpose.

Lescaut, who was not deficient in tact, and still less in that better part of valor called discretion, dwelt upon the necessity of acting with extreme caution: he said that my escape from St. Lazare, and the accident that happened on my leaving it, would assuredly create a sensation; that the lieutenant-general of police would cause a strict search to be made for me, and it would be difficult to evade him; in fine, that, unless disposed to encounter something worse, perhaps, then St. Lazare, it would be requisite for me to remain concealed for a few days, in order to give the enemy's zeal time to cool. No doubt this was wise counsel; but, one should have been wise oneself to have followed it. Such calculating slowness little suited my passion. The utmost I could bring myself to promise, was that I would sleep through the whole of the next day. He locked me in my bed-room, where I remained patiently until night.

I employed a great part of the time in devising schemes for relieving Manon. I felt persuaded that her prison was even more inaccessible than mine had been. Force was out of the question. Artifice was the only resource; but the goddess of invention herself could not have told me how to begin. I felt the impossibility of working in the dark, and therefore postponed the further consideration of my schemes until I could acquire some knowledge of the internal arrangements of the hospital, in which she was confined.

As soon as night restored to me my liberty, I begged of Lescaut to accompany me. We were not long in drawing one of the porters into conversation: he appeared a reasonable man. I passed for a stranger who had often with admiration heard talk of the hospital, and of the order that reigned within it. I inquired into the most minute details; and, proceeding from one subject to another, we at length spoke of the managers, and of these I begged to know the names and the respective characters. He gave me such information upon the latter point as, at once, suggested an idea which flattered my hopes, and I immediately set about carrying it into execution. I asked him (this being a matter essential to my plan), whether any of the gentlemen had children. He said he could not answer me with certainty as to all, but as for M. de T——, one of the principal directors, he knew he had a son old enough to be married, and who had come several times to the hospital with his father. This was enough for my purpose.

I immediately put an end to our interview, and, in returning, I told Lescaut of the plan I had formed. I have taken it, said I, into my head, that M. de T——, the son, who is rich and of good family, must have the same taste for pleasure that other young men of his age generally have. He could hardly be so bad a friend to the fair sex, nor so absurd, as to refuse his services in an affair of Love. I have arranged a plan for interesting him in favor of Manon. If he is a man of feeling and of right mind, he will give us his assistance from generosity. If he is not to be touched by a motive of this kind, he will at least do something for a handsome girl, if it were only with the hope of hereafter sharing her favors. I will not defer seeing him, added I, beyond to-morrow. I really feel so elated by this project, that I derive from it a good omen.

Lescaut himself allowed that the idea was not unreasonable, and that we might fairly entertain a hope of turning it to account. I passed the night less sorrowfully.

Next morning I dressed as well as, in my present state of indigence, I could possibly contrive to do; and went in a hackney coach to the residence of M. de T——. He was surprised at receiving a visit from a perfect stranger. I augured favorably from his countenance and the civility of his manner. I explained my object in the most candid way; and, to excite his feelings as much as possible, I spoke of my ardent passion and of Manon's merit, as of two things that were unequalled except by each other. He told me tha

although he had never seen Manon, he had heard of her; at least, if the person I was talking of was the same who had been the mistress of old G—— M——. I conjectured that he must have heard of the part I had acted in that transaction, and in order to conciliate him more and more by treating him with confidence, I told him everything that had occurred to Manon and myself. You see, sir, said I, that all that can interest me in life, all that can command my affections, is in your hands. I have no reserve with you, because I have been informed of your generous and noble character; and, being of the same age, I trust I shall find some resemblance in our dispositions.

He seemed flattered by this mark of candor and confidence. He replied in a manner that became a man of the world, and a man of feeling also, for they are not always synonymous terms. He told me that he appreciated my visit as a piece of good fortune; that he considered my friendship as a valuable acquisition, and that he would endeavor to prove himself worthy of it, by the sincerity of his services. He could not absolutely promise to restore Manon to my arms, because, as he said, he himself had very little influence; but he offered to procure me the pleasure of seeing her, and to do everything in his power to effect her release. I was the more satisfied with his frank avowal as to his want of influence, than I should have been by an unqualified promise of fulfilling all my wishes. I found in his moderation a pledge of his sincerity: in a word, I no longer doubted my entire success. The promise alone of enabling me to see Manon filled me with gratitude, and I testified it in so earnest a manner, as to give him a favorable opinion of my heart and disposition; we shook hands warmly, and parted sworn friends, merely from mutual regard, and that natural feeling which prompts a man of kind and generous sentiments to esteem another of congenial mind.

He indeed exceeded me in the proofs of his esteem; for, inferring from my adventures, and especially my late escape from St. Lazare, that I might be in want of money, he offered me his purse, and pressed me to accept it. I refused, but said to him, You are too kind, my dear sir! If in addition to such proofs of kindness and friendship, you enable me to see Manon again, rely on my eternal regard and gratitude. If you succeed in restoring altogether this dear creature to my arms, I should think myself happy in spilling the last drop of my blood in your service.

Before we parted we agreed as to the time and place for

our meeting. He was so considerate as to appoint the afternoon of the same day.

I waited for him at a café, where he joined me about four o'clock, and we went together towards the Magdalen; my knees trembled under me as I crossed the courts. Ye heavenly Powers! said I, then I shall once more behold the idol of my heart—the dear object of so many sighs and lamentations! All I now ask of Providence is, to vouchsafe me strength enough to reach her presence, and after that, to dispose as it pleaseth of my future fate, and of my life itself. Beyond this, I have no prayer to utter.

M. de T—— spoke to some of the porters of the establishment, who appeared all anxious to please him. The quarter in which Manon's room lay was pointed out to us, and our guide carried in his hand the key of her chamber: it was of frightful size. I asked the man who conducted us, and whose duty it was to attend to Manon, how she passed her time? He said, that she had a temper of the most angelic sweetness; that even he, disagreeable as his official duties must render him, had never heard from her a single syllable in the nature of rebuke or harshness; that her tears had never ceased to flow during the first six weeks after her arrival, but that latterly she seemed to bear her misfortunes with more resignation, and that she employed herself from morning till night with her needle, excepting some hours that she, each day, devoted to reading. I asked whether she had been decently provided for. He assured me that at least she had never felt the want of necessaries.

We now approached her door. My heart beat almost audibly in my bosom. I said to M. de T——, Go in alone, and prepare her for my visit; I fear that she may be overcome by seeing me unexpectedly. The door was opened. I remained in the passage and listened to the conversation. He said that he came to bring her consolation; that he was a friend of mine, and felt deeply interested for the happiness of us both. She asked with the tenderest anxiety, whether he could tell her what had become of me. He promised that she should soon see me at her feet, as affectionate and as faithful as ever. When? she asked. This very day, said he; the happy moment shall not be long delayed; nay, this very instant even, if you wish it. She at once understood that I was at the door; as she was rushing towards it, I entered. We embraced each other with that abounding and impassioned tenderness which an absence of many months makes so delicious to those who truly love.

Our sighs, our broken exclamations, the thousand endearing appellations of love, exchanged in languishing rapture, astonished M. de T——, and affected him even to tears.

I cannot help envying you, said he, as he begged us to be seated; there is no lot, however glorious, that I would hold as comparable to the possession of a mistress at once so tender and impassioned. Nor would I, I replied, give up her love for universal empire.

The remainder of an interview, which had been so long and so ardently desired by me, was of course, as tender as the commencement. Poor Manon related all her adventures, and I told her mine: we bitterly wept over each other's story. M. de T—— consoled us by his renewed promises to exert himself in our service. He advised us not to make this, our first interview, of too long duration, that he might have the less difficulty in procuring us the same enjoyment again. He at length induced us to follow his advice. Manon especially could not reconcile herself to the separation; she made me a hundred times resume my seat. At one time she held me by my hands, at another by my coat. Alas! she said, in what an abode you leave me? Who will answer for my ever seeing you again? M. de T—— promised her that he would often come and see her with me. As to the abode, he said, it must no longer be called the Magdalen; it is Versailles! now that it contains a person who deserves the empire of all hearts.

I made the man, who attended, a present as I went out, in order to quicken his zeal and attentions. This fellow had a mind less rough and vulgar than the generality of his class. He had witnessed our interview, and was affected by it. The interest he felt was doubtlessly increased by the lous d'or I gave him. He took me aside as we went down into the court-yard. Sir, said he, if you will only take me into your service, or indemnify me in any way for the loss of the situation which I fill here, I think I should not have much difficulty in liberating the beauteous Manon.

I caught readily at the suggestion, and, although at the moment I was almost in a state of destitution, I gave him promises far beyond his desires. I considered that it would be at all times easy to recompense a man of his description. Be assured, my friend, said I to him, that there is nothing I will not be ready to do for you, and that your fortune is just as certain as my own. I inquired what means he intended to employ. None other, said he, than merely to open the door of her cell for her at night, and to conduct her to

the street door, where you, of course, will be to receive her. I asked whether there was no danger of her being recognized as she traversed the long galleries and the courts. He admitted that there was danger, but that nothing could be done without some slight risk.

Although I was delighted to find him so determined, I called M. de T——, and informed him of the project, and of the only difficulty in the way. He thought it not so easy of execution. He allowed the possibility of escaping thus: But if she be recognized, continued he, if she be stopped in the attempt, all hope will be over with her, perhaps for ever. Besides, you would be obliged to quit Paris instantly, for you could never evade the search that would be made for you: they would redouble their efforts as much on your own account as hers. A single man may easily escape detection, but in company with a handsome woman, it would be utterly impossible to remain undiscovered.

However sound this reasoning, it could not, in my mind, outweigh the immediate prospect of restoring Manon to liberty. I said as much to M. de T——, and trusted that he would excuse my imprudence and rashness, on the ground of love. I added that it was already my intention to quit Paris for some neighboring village, as I had once before done. We then settled with the servant that he should carry his project into execution the following day, and to render our success as certain as he could, we resolved to carry into the prison men's clothes, in order to facilitate her escape. There was a difficulty to be surmounted in carrying them in, but I had ingenuity enough to meet it. I begged of M. de T—— only to put on two light waistcoats the next morning, and I undertook to arrange the rest.

We returned the following day to the hospital. I took with me linen, stockings, etc., for Manon, and over my body-coat a surtout, which concealed the bulk I carried in my pockets. We remained but a moment in her room. M. de T—— left her one of his waistcoats; I gave her my short coat, the surtout being sufficient for me. She found nothing wanting for her complete equipment but a pair of pantaloons, which, in my hurry, I had forgotten.

The want of so necessary an article might have amused us, if the embarrassment it caused had been of a less serious kind. I was in despair at having our whole scheme foiled by a trifling omission of this nature. However, I soon hit *on a remedy,* and determined to make my own exit *sans culottes, leaving* that portion of my dress with Manon. My

surtout was long, and I contrived by the help of a few pins to put myself in a decent condition for passing the gate.

The remainder of the day appeared to me of endless length. When at last night came, we went in a coach to within a few yards of the hospital. We were not long waiting, when we saw Manon make her appearance with her guide. The door of the coach being opened, they both stepped in without delay. I opened my arms to receive my adored mistress; she trembled like an aspen leaf. The coachman asked where he was to drive? To the end of the world! I exclaimed; to some place where I can never again be separated from Manon.

This burst, which I could not control, was near bringing me into fresh trouble. The coachman reflected upon what I said, and when I afterwards told him the name of the street to which I wished him to drive, he answered that he feared I was about to implicate him in some bad business; that he saw plainly enough that the good-looking young man whom I called Manon, was a girl eloping from the hospital, and that he was little disposed indeed to ruin himself for love of me.

Extortion was the source of this scoundrel's delicacy. We were still too near the hospital to make any noise. Silence! said I to him, you shall have a louis d'or for the job:—for less than that he would have helped me to burn the hospital.

We arrived at Lescaut's house. As it was late, M. de T—— left us on the way, promising to visit us the next morning. The servant alone remained.

I held Manon in such close embrace in my arms, that we occupied but one place in the coach. She cried for joy, and I could feel her tears trickling down my cheeks.

When we were about getting out at Lescaut's, I had a new difficulty with the coachman, which was attended with the most unforutnate results. I repented of having promised the fellow a louis d'or not only because it was extravagant folly, but for another stronger reason, that it was at the moment out of my power to pay him. I called for Lescaut, and he came down to the door. I whispered to him the cause of my present embarrassment. Being naturally rough, and not at all in the habit of treating hackney coachmen with respect, he answered that I could not be serious. A louis! said he; twenty blows of a cane would be the right payment for that rascal! I entreated him not to destroy us; when he snatched my cane from my hand, and was about to lay it on the coachman. The fellow had probably before experienced the

weight of a guardsman's arm, and instantly drove off, crying that I had cheated him and should hear of him again. I in vain endeavored to stop him.

His flight caused me, of course, the greatest alarm. I had no doubt that he would immediately give information to the police. You have ruined me, said I to Lescaut; I shall be no longer safe at your house; we must go hence at once. I gave Manon my arm, and as quickly as possible got out of the dangerous neighborhood. Lescaut accompanied us.

The Chevalier des Grieux having occupied more than an hour with his story, I begged him to give himself a little rest, and meanwhile to share our supper. He saw, by the attention we paid him, that we were amused, and promised that we should hear something of perhaps greater interest in the sequel. When we had finished supper, he continued in the following words.

CHAPTER VII

"...... How chances mock,
And changes fill the cup of alteration
With divers liquors."—SHAKESPEARE.

How inscrutably does Providence connect events! We had hardly proceeded for five minutes on our way, when a man whose face I could not see, recognized Lescaut. He had no doubt been watching for him near his home, with the horrible intention which he now unhappily executed. It *is* Lescaut! said he, snapping a pistol at his head; he shall sup to-night with the angels! He then instantly disappeared. Lescaut fell, without the least sign of life. I pressed Manon to fly, for we could be of no use to a dead man, and I feared being arrested by the police, who would certainly be soon upon the spot. I turned down the first narrow street with her and the servant; she was so overpowered by the scene she had just witnessed, that I could hardly support her. At last, at the end of the street, I perceived a hackney coach; we got into it, but when the coachman asked whither he should drive, I was scarcely able to answer him. I had no certain asylum—no confidential friend to whom I could have recourse. I was almost destitute of money, having but one louis left in my purse. Fright and fatigue had so unnerved Manon, that she was almost fainting at my side. My imagination too was full of the murder of Lescaut, and I was not without strong apprehensions of the patrol. What was to be done? I luckily remembered the inn at Chaillot, where we first went to reside in that village. I hoped to be not only secure, but to continue there for some time without being pressed for payment. Take us to Chaillot, said I to the coachman. He refused to drive us so far at that late hour for less than twelve francs. A new embarrassment! At last we agreed for half the sum—all that my purse contained.

I tried to console Manon as we went along, but despair was rankling in my own heart. I should have destroyed myself a thousand times over, if I had not felt that I held in my arms all that could attach me to life: this reflection recon-

ciled me. I possess her at least, said I; she loves me! she is mine! Vainly does Tiberge call this a mere phantom of happiness. I could, without feeling interest or emotion, see the whole world besides perish around me. Why? Because I have in it no object of affection beyond her.

This sentiment was true; however, while I so lightly esteemed the good things of the world, I felt that there was no doing without some little portion of them, were it only to inspire a more thorough contempt for the remainder. Love is more powerful than wealth—more attractive than grandeur or fame; but, alas! it cannot exist without certain artificial aids; and there is nothing more humiliating to the feelings of a sensitive lover, than to find himself, by want of means, reduced to the level of the most vulgar minds.

It was eleven o'clock when we arrived at Chaillot. They received us at the inn as old acquaintances, and expressed no sort of surprise at seeing Manon in male attire, for it was the custom in Paris and the environs to adopt all disguises. I took care to have her served with as much attention as if I had been in prosperous circumstances. She was ignorant of my poverty, and I carefully kept her so, being resolved to return alone the following day to Paris, to seek some cure for this vexatious kind of malady.

At supper she appeared pale and thin; I had not observed this at the hospital, as the room in which I saw her was badly lighted. I asked her if the excessive paleness were not caused by the shock of witnessing her brother's death? She assured me that, horrified as she naturally was at the event, her paleness was purely the effect of a three months' absence from me. You do love me then devotedly? I exclaimed.

A thousand times more than I can tell! was her reply.

You will never leave me again? I added.

No! never, never! answered she.

This assurance was confirmed by so many caresses and vows, that it appeared impossible she could, to the end of time, forget them. I have never doubted that she was at that moment sincere. What motive could she have had for dissembling to such a degree? But she became afterwards still more volatile than ever, or rather she was no longer anything, and entirely forgot herself, when, in poverty and want, she saw other women living in abundance. I was now on the point of receiving a new proof of her inconstancy, which threw all that had passed into the shade, and whic

led to the strangest adventure that ever happened to a man of my birth and prospects.

As I knew her disposition, I hastened the next day to Paris. The death of her brother, and the necessity of getting linen and clothes for her, were such good reasons, that I had no occasion for any further pretext. I left the inn, with the intention, as I told Manon and the landlord, of going in a hired carriage, but this was a mere flourish; necessity obliged me to travel on foot: I walked very fast as far as Cours-la-Reine, where I intended to rest. A moment of solitude and tranquillity was requisite to compose myself, and to consider what was to be done in Paris.

I sat down upon the grass. I plunged into a sea of thoughts and considerations, which at length resolved themselves into three principal heads. I had pressing want of an infinite number of absolute necessaries; I had to seek some mode of at least raising a hope for the future; and, though last, not least in importance, I had to gain information, and adopt measures, to secure Manon's safety and my own. After having exhausted myself in devising projects upon these three chief points, I was obliged to put out of view for the moment the two last. We were not ill sheltered from observation in the inn at Chaillot; and as to future wants, I thought it would be time enough to think about them when those of the moment were satisfied.

The main object now was to replenish my purse. M. de T—— had once offered me his, but I had an extreme repugnance to mention the subject to him again. What a degradation to expose one's misery to a stranger, and to ask for charity: it must be either a man of low mind who would thus bemean himself, and that from a baseness which must render him insensible to the degradation, or a humble Christian, from a consciousness of generosity in himself, which must put him above the sense of shame. I would have sacrificed half my life to be spared the humiliation.

Tiberge, said I, kind Tiberge, will he refuse me what he has it in his power to grant? No, he will assuredly sympathize in my misery; but he will also torture me with his lectures! One must endure his reproaches, his exhortations, his threats: I shall have to purchase his assistance so dearly, that I would rather make any sacrifice than encounter this distressing scene, which cannot fail to leave me full of sorrow and remorse. Well, thought I, again, *all hope must be* relinquished, since no other course presents *itself; so* far am I from adopting either of these,

that I would sooner shed half my blood than face one of these evils, or the last drop rather than encounter both. Yes, the very last drop, I repeated after a moment's reflection, I would sacrifice willingly rather than submit to such base supplication!

But it is not in reality a question of my existence! Manon's life and maintenance, her love and her fidelity, are at stake! What consideration can outweigh that? In her are centered all my glory, happiness, and future fortune! There are doubtless many things that I would gladly give up my life to obtain, or to avoid; but to estimate a thing merely beyond the value of my own life, is not putting it on a par with that of Manon. This idea soon decided me: I went on my way, resolved to go first to Tiberge, and afterwards to M. de T——.

On entering Paris I took a hackney-coach, though I had not the wherewithal to pay for it; I calculated on the loan I was going to solicit. I drove to the Luxembourg, whence I sent word to Tiberge that I was waiting for him. I had not to stay many minutes. I told him without hesitation the extremity of my wants. He asked if the fifty pounds which I had returned to him would suffice, and he at once went to fetch it with that generous air, that pleasure in bestowing which "blesseth him that gives, and him that takes," and which can only be known to Love or to true Friendship.

Although I had never entertained a doubt of Tiberge's readiness to grant my request, yet I was surprised at having obtained it on such easy terms, that is to say, without a word or reprimand for my impenitence; but I was premature in fancying myself safe from his reproaches, for when he had counted out the money, and I was on the point of going away, he begged me to take a walk with him in the garden. I had not mentioned Manon's name; he knew nothing of her escape; so that his lecture was merely upon my own rash flight from St. Lazare, and upon his apprehensions lest, instead of profiting by the lessons of morality which I had received there, I should again relapse into dissipation.

He told me, that having gone to pay me a visit at St. Lazare, the day after my escape, he had been astonished beyond expression at hearing the mode in which I had effected it; that he had afterwards a conversation with the Superior; that the good father had not quite recovered from the shock; that he had, however, the generosity to conceal the real circumstances from the lieutenant-general of police,

and that he had prevented the death of the porter from becoming known outside the walls; that I had, therefore, upon that score, no ground for alarm, but that, if I retained one grain of prudence, I should profit by this happy turn which Providence had given to my affairs, and begin by writing to my father, and reconciling myself to his favor; and finally that, if I would be guided by his advice, I should at once quit Paris, and return to the bosom of my family.

I listened to him attentively till he had finished. There was much in what he said to gratify me. In the first place, I was delighted to learn that I had nothing to fear on account of St. Lazare—the streets of Paris at least were again open to me. Then I rejoiced to find that Tiberge had no suspicion of Manon's escape, and her return to my arms. I even remarked that he had not mentioned her name, probably from the idea that, by my seeming indifference to her, she had become less dear to my heart. I resolved, if not to return home, at least to write to my father, as he advised me, and to assure him that I was disposed to return to my duty, and consult his wishes. My intention was to urge him to send me money for the purpose of pursuing my ordinary studies at the University, for I should have found it difficult to persuade him that I had any inclination to resume my ecclesiastical habit. I was in truth not at all averse to what I was now going to promise him. On the contrary, I was ready to apply myself to some creditable and rational pursuit, so far as the occupation would be compatible with my love. I reckoned upon being able to live with my mistress, and at the same time continuing my studies. I saw no inconsistency in this plan.

These thoughts were so satisfactory to my mind, that I promised Tiberge to dispatch a letter by that day's post to my father: in fact, on leaving him, I went into a scrivener's, and wrote in such a submissive and dutiful tone, that, on reading over my own letter, I anticipated the triumph I was going to achieve over my father's heart.

Although I had money enough to pay for a hackney-coach after my interview with Tiberge, I felt a pleasure in walking independently through the streets to M. de T——'s house. There was great comfort in this unaccustomed exercise of my liberty, as to which my friend had assured me I had nothing now to apprehend. However, it suddenly occurred to me, that he had been only referring to St. Lazare, and that I had the other affair of the hospital on my hands;

being implicated, if not as an accomplice, at all events as a witness. This thought alarmed me so much, that I slipped down the first narrow street, and called a coach. I went at once to M. de T——'s, and he laughed at my apprehensions. I myself thought them ridiculous enough, when he informed me that there was no more danger from Lescaut's affray, than from the hospital adventure. He told me that, from the fear of their suspecting that he had a hand in Manon's escape, he had gone that morning to the hospital, and asked to see her, pretending not to know anything of what had happened; that they were so far from entertaining the least suspicion of either of us, that they lost no time in relating the adventure as a piece of news to him; and that they wondered how so pretty a girl as Manon Lescaut could have thought of eloping with a servant: that he replied with seeming indifference, that it by no means astonished him, for people would do anything for the sake of liberty.

He continued to tell me how he then went to Lescaut's apartments, in the hope of finding me there with my dear mistress; that the master of the house, who was a coach-maker, protested he had seen neither me nor Manon; but that it was no wonder that we had not appeared there, if our object was to see Lescaut, for that we must have doubtless heard of his having been assassinated about the very same time; upon which, he related all that he knew of the cause and circumstances of the murder.

About two hours previously, a guardsman of Lescaut's acquaintance had come to see him, and proposed play. Lescaut had such a rapid and extravagant run of luck, that in an hour the young man was minus twelve hundred francs,—all the money he had. Finding himself without a *sou*, he begged of Lescaut to lend him half the sum he had lost; and there being some difficulty on this point, an angry quarrel arose between them. Lescaut had refused to give him the required satisfaction, and the other swore, on quitting him, that he would take his life; a threat which he carried into execution the same night. M. de T—— was kind enough to add, that he had felt the utmost anxiety on our account, and that, such as they were, he should gladly continue to us his services. I at once told him the place of our retreat. He begged of me to allow him to sup with us.

As I had nothing more to do than to procure the linen and clothes for Manon, I told him that we might start *almost immediately*, if he would be so good as to wait for *me a moment*, while I went into one or two shops. I know

not whether he suspected that I made this proposition with the view of calling his generosity into play, or whether it was by the mere impulse of a kind heart; but, having consented to start immediately, he took me to a shopkeeper, who had lately furnished his house. He there made me select several articles of a much higher price than I had proposed to myself; and when I was about paying the bill, he desired the man not to take a *sou* from me. This he did so gracefully, that I felt no shame in accepting his present. We then took the road to Chaillot together, where I arrived much more easy in mind than when I had left it that morning.

My return and the polite attentions of M. de T—— dispelled all Manon's melancholy. Let us forget our past annoyances, my dear soul, said I to her, and endeavor to live a still happier life than before. After all, there are worse masters than Love: Fate cannot subject us to as much sorrow as Love enables us to taste of happiness. Our supper was a true scene of joy.

In possession of Manon and of twelve hundred and fifty francs, I was prouder and more contented than the richest voluptuary of Paris with untold treasures. Wealth should be measured by the means it affords us of satisfying our desires. There did not remain to me at this moment a single wish unaccomplished. Even the future gave me little concern. I felt a hope, amounting almost to certainty, that my father would allow me the means of living respectably in Paris, because I had become entitled, on entering upon my twentieth year, to a share of my mother's fortune. I did not conceal from Manon what was the extent of my present wealth; but I added, that it might suffice to support us until our fortune was bettered, either by the inheritance I have just alluded to, or by the resources of the hazard-table.

CHAPTER VIII

"This passion hath its floods in the very times of weakness, which are great prosperity, and great adversity; both which times kindle Love, and make it more fervent."—BACON.

FOR several weeks I thus continued to think only of enjoying the full luxury of my situation; and being restrained, by a sense of honor, as well as a lurking apprehension of the police, from renewing my intimacy with my former companions at the Hotel of Transylvania, I began to play in certain coteries less notorious, where my good luck rendered it unnecessary for me to have recourse to my former accomplishments. I passed a part of the afternoon in town, and returned always to supper at Chaillot, accompanied very often by M. de T——, whose intimacy and friendship for us daily increased.

Manon soon found resources against ennui. She became acquainted with some young ladies, whom the spring brought into the neighborhood. They occupied their leisure hours in walking, and the customary amusements of persons of their sex and age. Their little gains at cards (always within innocent limits) were laid out in defraying the expense of a coach, in which they took an airing occasionally in the Bois de Boulogne; and each night when I returned, I was sure of finding Manon more beautiful—more contented—more affectionate than ever.

There arose, however, certain clouds, which seemed to threaten the continuance of this blissful tranquillity, but they were soon dispelled; and Manon's sprightliness made the affair so excessively comical in its termination, that it is even now pleasing to recur to it, as a proof of the tenderness as well as the cheerfulness of her disposition.

The only servant we had came to me one day with great embarrassment, and taking me aside, told me that he had a secret of the utmost importance to communicate to me. I urged him to explain himself without reserve. After some hesitation, he gave me to understand that a foreigner of high rank had apparently fallen in love with Manon. I *felt my blood boil* at the announcement. Has she shown

any penchant for him? I inquired, interrupting my informant with more impatience than was requisite, if I desired to have a full explanation.

He was alarmed at my excitement; and replied in an undecided tone, that he had not made sufficiently minute observations to satisfy me; but that, having noticed for several days together the regular arrival of the stranger at the Bois de Boulogne, where, quitting his carriage, he walked by himself in the cross avenues, appearing to seek opportunities of meeting Manon, it had occurred to him to form an acquaintance with the servants, in order to discover the name of their master; that they spoke of him as an Italian prince, and that they also suspected he was upon some adventure of gallantry. He had not been able to learn anything further, he added, trembling as he spoke, because the Prince, then on the point of leaving the wood, had approached him, and with the most condescending familiarity asked his name; upon which, as if he at once knew that he was in our service, he congratulated him on having, for his mistress, the most enchanting person upon earth.

I listened to this recital with the greatest impatience. He ended with the most awkward excuses, which I attributed to the premature and imprudent display of my own agitation. In vain I implored him to continue his history. He protested that he knew nothing more, and that what he had previously told me, having only happened the preceding day, he had not had a second opportunity of seeing the Prince's servants. I encouraged him, not only with praises, but with a substantial recompense; and without betraying the slightest distrust of Manon, I requested him, in the mildest manner, to keep strict watch upon all the foreigner's movements.

In truth, the effect of his fright was to leave me in a state of the cruellest suspense. It was possible that she had ordered him to suppress part of the truth. However, after a little reflection, I recovered sufficiently from my fears to see the manner in which I had exposed my weaknesses. I could hardly consider it a crime in Manon to be loved. Judging from appearances, it was probable that she was not even aware of her conquest. And what kind of life shall I in future lead, thought I, if I am capable of letting jealousy so easily take possession of my mind.

I returned on the following day to Paris, with no other intention than to hasten the improvement of my fortune, by playing deeper than ever, in order to be in a condition to quit Chaillot on the first real occasion for uneasiness.

That night I learned nothing at all calculated to trouble my repose. The foreigner had, as usual, made his appearance in the Bois de Boulogne; and venturing, from what had passed the preceding day, to accost my servant more familiarly, he spoke to him openly of his passion, but in such terms as not to lead to the slightest suspicion of Manon's being aware of it. He put a thousand questions to him, and at last tried to bribe him with large promises, and taking a letter from his pocket, he in vain entreated him, with the promise of some louis d'ors, to convey it to her.

Two days passed without anything more occurring: the third was of a different character. I learned on my arrival, later than usual, from Paris, that Manon, while in the wood, had left her companions for a moment, and that the foreigner, who had followed her at a short distance, approached, upon her making him a sign, and that she handed him a letter, which he took with a transport of joy. He had only time to express his delight by kissing the *billet-doux*, for she was out of sight in an instant. But she appeared in unusually high spirits the remainder of the day; and even after her return to our lodgings, her gaiety continued. I trembled at every word.

Are you perfectly sure, said I, in an agony of fear, to my servant, that your eyes have not deceived you? He called Heaven to witness the truth of what he had told me.

I know not to what excess the torments of my mind would have driven me, if Manon, who heard me come in, had not met me with an air of impatience, and complained of my delay. Before I had time to reply, she loaded me with caresses; and when she found we were alone, she reproached me warmly with the habit I was contracting of staying out so late. My silence gave her an opportunity of continuing; and she then said that for the last three weeks I had never spent one entire day in her society; that she could not endure such prolonged absence; that she should at least expect me to give up a day to her from time to time, and that she particularly wished me to be with her on the following day from morning till night.

You may be very certain I shall do that, said I, in rather a sharp tone. She did not appear to notice my annoyance; she seemed to me to have more than her usual cheerfulness; and she described, with infinite pleasantry, the manner in which she had spent the day.

Incomprehensible girl! said I to myself; what am I to expect after such a prelude? The adventures of my first sepa

ration occurred to me; nevertheless, I fancied I saw in her cheerfulness, and the affectionate reception she gave me, an air of truth that perfectly accorded with her professions.

It was an easy matter at supper to account for the low spirits which I could not conceal, by attributing them to a loss I had that day sustained at the gaming-table. I considered it most fortunate that the idea of my remaining all the next day at Chaillot was suggested by herself: I should thus have ample time for deliberation. My presence would prevent any fears for at least the next day; and if nothing should occur to compel me to disclose the discovery I had already made, I was determined on the following day to move my establishment into town, and fix myself in a quarter where I should have nothing to apprehend from the interference of princes. This arrangement made me pass the night more tranquilly, but it by no means put an end to the alarm I felt at the prospect of a new infidelity.

When I awoke in the morning, Manon said to me, that although we were to pass the day at home, she did not at all wish that I should be less carefully dressed than on other occasions; and that she had a particular fancy for doing the duties of my toilette that morning with her own hands. It was an amusement she often indulged in; but she appeared to take more pains on this occasion than I had ever observed before. To gratify her, I was obliged to sit at her toilette table, and try all the different modes she imagined for dressing my hair. In the course of the operation, she made me often turn my head round towards her, and putting both hands upon my shoulders, she would examine me with most anxious curiosity: then, showing her approbation by one or two kisses, she would make me resume my position before the glass, in order to continue her occupation.

This amatory trifling engaged us till dinner-time. The pleasure she seemed to derive from it, and her more than usual gaiety, appeared to me so thoroughly natural, that I found it impossible any longer to suspect the treason I had previously conjured up; and I was several times on the point of candidly opening my mind to her, and throwing off a load that had begun to weigh heavily upon my heart: but I flattered myself with the hope that the explanation would every moment come from herself, and I anticipated the delicious triumph this would afford me.

We returned to her boudoir. She again began to put *my hair in order*, and I humored all her whims; when

they came to say that the Prince of —— was below, and wished to see her. The name alone almost threw me into a rage.

What then, exclaimed I, as I indignantly pushed her from me, who?—what prince?

She made no answer to my inquiries.

Show him upstairs, said she coolly to the servant; and then turning towards me, Dearest love! you whom I so fervently adore, she added in the most bewitching tone, I only ask of you one moment's patience; one moment, one single moment! I will love you ten thousand times more than ever: your compliance now shall never, during my life, be forgotten.

Indignation and astonishment deprived me of the power of utterance. She renewed her entreaties, and I could not find adequate expressions to convey my feelings of anger and contempt. But hearing the door of the antechamber open, she grasped with one hand my locks, which were floating over my shoulders, while she took her toilette mirror in the other, and with all her strength led me in this manner to the door of the boudoir, which she opened with her knee, and presented to the foreigner, who had been prevented by the noise he heard inside from advancing beyond the middle of the antechamber, a spectacle that must have indeed amused him. I saw a man extremely well dressed, but with a particularly ill-favored countenance.

Notwithstanding his embarrassment, he made her a profound bow. Manon gave him no time for speech-making; she held up the mirror before him: Look, sir, said she to him, observe yourself minutely, and I only ask you then to do me justice. You wish me to love you: this is the man whom I love, and whom I have sworn to love during my whole life: make the comparison yourself. If you think you can rival him in my affections, tell me at least upon what pretensions; for I solemnly declare to you, that in the estimation of your most obedient humble servant, all the princes in Italy are not worth a single one of the hairs I now hold in my hand.

During this whimsical harangue, which she had apparently prepared beforehand, I tried in vain to disengage myself, and feeling compassion for a person of such consideration, I was desirous, by my politeness at least, of making some reparation for this little outrage. But recovering his self-possession with the ease of a man accustomed

to the world, he put an end to my feelings of pity by his reply, which was, in my opinion, rude enough.

Young lady! young lady, said he to her, with a sardonic smile, my eyes in truth are opened, and I perceive that you are much less of a novice than I had pictured to myself.

He immediately retired without looking at her again, muttering to himself that the French women were quite as bad as those of Italy. I felt little desire, on this occasion, to change his opinion of the fair sex.

Manon let go my hand, threw herself into an arm-chair, and made the room resound with her shouts of laughter. I candidly confess that I was touched most sensibly by this unexpected proof of her affections, and by the sacrifice of her own interest which I had just witnessed, and which she could only have been induced to make by her excessive love for me. Still, however, I could not help thinking she had gone rather too far. I reproached her with what I called her indiscretion.

She told me that my rival, after having besieged her for several days in the Bois de Boulogne, and having made her comprehend his object by signs and grimaces, had actually made an open declaration of love; informing her at the same time of his name and all his titles, by means of a letter, which he had sent through the hands of the coachman who drove her and her companions; that he had promised her, on the other side of the Alps, a brilliant fortune and eternal adoration; that she returned to Chaillot, with the intention of relating to me the whole adventure, but that, fancying it might be made a source of amusement to us, she could not help gratifying her whim; that she accordingly invited the Italian prince, by a flattering note, to pay her a visit; and that it had afforded her equal delight to make me an accomplice, without giving me the least suspicion of her plan. I said not a word of the information I had received through another channel; and the intoxication of triumphant love made me applaud all she had done.

CHAPTER IX

"'T'was ever thus;—from childhood's hour
I've seen my fondest hopes decay;—
I never loved a tree or flower,
But it was sure to fade away;
I never nursed a dear Gazelle,
To glad me with its dark-blue eye,
But, when it came to know me well,
And love me, it was sure to die."—MOORE.

rING my life I have remarked that Fate has in-ly chosen for the time of its severest visitations, those nts when my fortune seemed established on the firm-sis. In the friendship of M. de T——, and the tender ons of Manon, I imagined myself so thoroughly , that I could not harbor the slightest apprehension of w misfortune: there was one nevertheless at this very impending, which reduced me to the state in which held me at Passy, and which eventually brought in its niseries of so deplorable a nature, that you will have ty in believing the simple recital that follows.

evening, when M. de T—— remained to sup with heard the sound of a carriage stopping at the door inn. Curiosity tempted us to see who it was that d at this hour. They told us it was young G——, the son of our most vindictive enemy, of that old who had incarcerated me in St. Lazare, and Manon hospital. His name made the blood mount to my .—It is Providence that has led him here, said I to T——, that I may punish him for the cowardly ss of his father. He shall not escape without our ring swords at least. M. de T——, who knew him, 'as even one of his most intimate friends, tried to ate my feelings of anger towards him. He assured at he was a most amiable young man, and so little e of countenancing his father's conduct, that I could many minutes in his society without feeling esteem ffection for him. After saying many more things in aise, *he begged* my permission to invite him to come *in our* apartment, as well as to share the remainder

of our supper. As to the objection of Manon's being exposed by this proceeding to any danger, he pledged his honor and good faith, that when once the young man became acquainted with us, we should find in him a most zealous defender. After such an assurance, I could offer no further opposition.

M. de T—— did not introduce him without delaying a few moments outside, to let him know who we were. He certainly came in with an air that prepossessed us in his favor: he shook hands with me; we sat down; he admired Manon; he appeared pleased with me, and with everything that belonged to us, and he ate with an appetite that did abundant honor to our hospitality.

When the table was cleared, our conversation became more serious. He hung down his head while he spoke of his father's conduct towards us. He made, on his own part, the most submissive excuses.—I say the less upon the subject, said he, because I do not wish to recall a circumstance that fills me with grief and shame. If he were sincere in the beginning, he became much more so in the end, for the conversation had not lasted half an hour, when I perceived that Manon's charms had made a visible impression upon him. His looks and his manner became by degrees more tender. He, however, allowed no expression to escape him; but, without even the aid of jealousy, I had had experience enough in love affairs to discern what was passing.

He remained with us till a late hour in the night, and before he took his leave, congratulated himself on having made our acquaintance, and begged permission to call and renew the offer of his services. He went off next morning with M. de T——, who accepted the offer of a seat in his carriage.

I felt, as I before said, not the slightest symptom of jealousy: I had a more foolish confidence than ever in Manon's vows. This dear creature had so absolute a dominion over my whole soul and affections, that I could give place to no other sentiment towards her than that of admiration and love. Far from considering it a crime that she should have pleased young G—— M——, I was gratified by the effect of her charms, and experienced only a feeling of pride in being loved by a girl whom the whole world found so enchanting. I did not even deem it worth while to mention my suspicions to her. We were for some days occupied in arranging her new wardrobe, and in con-

sidering whether we might venture to the theater without the risk of being recognized. M. de T—— came again to see us before the end of the week, and we consulted him upon this point. He saw clearly that the way to please Manon was to say yes: we resolved to go all together that same evening.

We were not able, however, to carry this intention into effect; for, having taken me aside:—I have been in the greatest embarrassment, said he to me, since I saw you, and that is the cause of my visiting you to-day. G—— M—— is in love with your mistress: he told me so in confidence; I am his intimate friend, and disposed to do him any service in my power; but I am not less devoted to you; his designs appeared to me unjustifiable, and I expressed my disapprobation of them; I should not have divulged his secret, if he had only intended to use fair and ordinary means for gaining Manon's affections; but he is aware of her capricious disposition; he has learned, God knows how, that her ruling passion is for affluence and pleasure; and, as he is already in possession of a considerable fortune, he declared his intention of tempting her at once with a present of great value, and the offer of an annuity of six thousand francs; if I had in all other points considered you both in an equal light, I should have had perhaps to do more violence to my feelings in betraying him: but a sense of justice as well as of friendship was on your side, and the more so from having been myself the imprudent, though unconscious, cause of his passion in introducing him here. I feel it my duty therefore to avert any evil consequences from the mischief I have inadvertently caused.

I thanked M. de T—— for rendering me so important a service, and confessed to him, in a like spirit of confidence, that Manon's disposition was precisely what G—— M—— had imagined; that is to say, that she was incapable of enduring even the thought of poverty.—However, said I to him, when it is a mere question of more or less, I do not believe that she would give me up for any other person; I can afford to let her want for nothing, and I have from day to day reason to hope that my fortune will improve; I only dread one thing, continued I, which is, that G—— M—— may take unfair advantage of the knowledge he has of our place of residence, and bring us into trouble by disclosing it.

M. de T—— assured me that I might be perfectly eas

upon that head; that G—— M—— might be capable of a silly passion, but not of an act of baseness: that if he ever could be villain enough for such a thing, he, de T——, would be the first to punish him, and by that means make reparation for the mischief he had occasioned.—I feel grateful for what you say, said I, but the mischief will have been all done, and the remedy even seems doubtful; the wisest plan therefore will be to quit Chaillot, and go to reside elsewhere.—Very true, said M. de T——, but you will not be able to do it quickly enough, for G—— M—— is to be here at noon; he told me so yesterday, and it was that intelligence that made me come so early this morning to inform you of his intentions. You may expect him every moment.

The urgency of the occasion made me view this matter in a more serious light. As it seemed to me impossible to escape the visit of G—— M——, and perhaps equally so to prevent him from making his declaration to Manon, I resolved to tell her beforehand of the designs of my new rival. I fancied that when she knew I was aware of the offers that would be made to her, and made probably in my presence, she would be the more likely to reject them. I told M. de T—— of my intention, and he observed that he thought it a matter of extreme delicacy.—I admit it, said I, but no man ever had more reason for confiding in a mistress, than I have for relying on the affection of mine. The only thing that could possibly for a moment blind her, is the splendor of his offers; no doubt she loves her ease, but she loves me also; and in my present circumstances, I cannot believe that she would abandon me for the son of the man who had incarcerated her in the Magdalen. In fine, I persisted in my intentions, and taking Manon aside, I candidly told her what I had learned.

She thanked me for the good opinion I entertained of her, and promised to receive G—— M——'s offers in a way that should prevent a repetition of them.—No, said I, you must not irritate him by incivility; he has it in his power to injure us. But you know well enough, you little rogue, continued I, smiling, how to rid yourself of a disagreeable or useless lover! After a moment's pause she said: I have just thought of an admirable plan, and I certainly have a fertile invention. G—— M—— is the son of our bitterest enemy: we must avenge ourselves on the father, not through the son's person, but through hi

purse. My plan is to listen to his proposals, accept his presents, and then laugh at him.

The project is not a bad one, said I to her; but you forget, my dear child, that it is precisely the same course that conducted us formerly to the Penitentiary. I represented to her the danger of such an enterprise; she replied, that the only thing necessary was to take our measures with caution, and she found an answer to every objection I started. Show me the lover who does not blindly humor every whim of an adored mistress, and I will then allow that I was wrong in yielding so easily on this occasion. The resolution was taken to make a dupe of G—— M——, and by an unforeseen and unlucky turn of fortune, I became the victim myself.

About eleven o'clock his carriage drove up to the door. He made the most complaisant and refined speeches upon the liberty he had taken of coming to dine with us uninvited. He was not surprised at meeting M. de T——, who had the night before promised to meet him there, and who had, under some pretext or other, refused a seat in his carriage. Although there was not a single person in the party who was not at heart meditating treachery, we all sat down with an air of mutual confidence and friendship. G—— M—— easily found an opportunity of declaring his sentiments to Manon. I did not wish to annoy him by appearing vigilant, so I left the room purposely for several minutes.

I perceived on my return that he had not had to encounter any very discouraging austerity on Manon's part, for he was in the best possible spirits. I affected good humor also. He was laughing in his mind at my simplicity, while I was not less diverted by his own. During the whole evening we were thus supplying to each other an inexhaustible fund of amusement. I contrived, before his departure, to let him have Manon for another moment to himself; so that he had reason to applaud my complaisance, as well as the hospitable reception I had given him.

As soon as he got into his carraige with M. de T——, Manon ran towards me with extended arms, and embraced me; laughing all the while immoderately. She repeated all his speeches and proposals, without altering a word. This was the substance:—He of course adored her; and wished to share with her a large fortune of which he was already in possession, without counting what he was to inherit his father's death. She should be sole mistress of his h

and fortune; and as an immediate token of his liberality, he was ready at once to supply her with an equipage, a furnished house, a lady's maid, three footmen, and a man-cook.

There is indeed a son, said I, very different from his father! But tell me truly, now, does not such an offer tempt you? Me, she replied, adapting to the idea two verses from Racine,—

Moi! vous soupçonnez de cette perfidie?
Moi! je pourrais souffrir un visage odieux,
Qui rappelle toujours l'Hôpital à mes yeux?

No! replied I, continuing the parody,—

J'aurais peine à penser que lHôpital, madame,
Fût un trait dont l'amour l'eût gravé dans votre âme.

But it assuredly is a temptation—a furnished house, a lady's maid, a cook, a carriage, and three servants—gallantry can offer but few more seductive temptations.

She protested that her heart was entirely mine, and that it was for the future only open to the impressions I chose to make upon it.—I look upon his promises, said she, as an instrument for revenge, rather than as a mark of love. I asked her if she thought of accepting the hotel and the carriage. She replied that his money was all she wanted.

The difficulty was, how to obtain the one without the other; we resolved to wait for a detailed explanation of the whole project in a letter which G—— M—— promised to write to her, and which in fact she received next morning by a servant out of livery, who very cleverly contrived an opportunity of speaking to her alone. She told him to wait for an answer, and immediately brought the letter to me: we opened it together.

Passing over the usual commonplace expressions of tenderness, it gave a particular detail of my rival's promises. There were no limits to the expense. He engaged to pay her down ten thousand francs on her taking possession of the hotel, and to supply her expenditure in such a way that she would never have less than that sum at her command. The appointed day for her entering into possession was close at hand. He only required two days for all his preparations, and he mentioned the name of the street and the hotel, where he promised to be in waiting for her in the afternoon of the second day, if she could manage to

escape my vigilance. That was the only point upon which he begged of her to relieve his uneasiness; he seemed to be quite satisfied upon every other: but he added that, if she apprehended any difficulty in escaping from me, he could find sure means for facilitating her flight.

G—— M—— the younger was more cunning then the old gentleman. He wanted to secure his prey before he counted out the cash. We considered what course Manon should adopt. I made another effort to induce her to give up the scheme, and strongly represented all its dangers, nothing, however, could shake her determination.

Her answer to G—— M—— was brief, merely assuring him that she could be, without the least difficulty, in Paris on the appointed day, and that he might expect her with certainty.

We then resolved that I should instantly hire lodgings in some village on the other side of Paris, and that I should take our luggage with me; that in the afternoon of the following day, which was the time appointed, she should go to Paris; that, after receiving G—— M——'s presents, she should earnestly entreat him to take her to the theater; that she should carry with her as large a portion of the money as she could, and charge my servant with the remainder, for it was agreed that he was to accompany her. He was the man who had rescued her from the Magdalen, and he was devotedly attached to us. I was to be with a hackney-coach at the end of the street of St. André-des-arcs, and to leave it there about seven o'clock, while I stole, under cover of the twilight, to the door of the theater. Manon promised to make some excuse for quitting her box for a moment, when she would come down and join me. The rest could be easily done. We were then to return to my hackney-coach, and quit Paris by the Faubourg St. Antoine, which was the road to our new residence.

This plan, extravagant as it was, appeared to us satisfactorily arranged. But our greatest folly was in imagining that, succeed as we might in its execution, it would be impossible for us to escape the consequences. Nevertheless, we exposed ourselves to all risk with the blindest confidence.

Manon took her departure with Marcel,—so was the servant called. I could not help feeling a pang as sh took leave of me.—Manon, said I, do not deceive me; w you be faithful to me? She complained, in the tende

tone, of my want of confidence, and renewed all her protestations of eternal love.

She was to be in Paris at three o'clock I went some time after. I spent the remainder of the afternoon moping in the Café de Fère, near the Pont St. Michel. I remained there till night-fall. I then hired a hackney-coach, which I placed, according to our plan, at the end of the street at St. André-des-arcs, and went on foot to the door of the theater. I was surprised at not seeing Marcel, who was to have been there waiting for me. I waited patiently for a full hour, standing among a crowd of lacqueys, and gazing at every person that passed. At length, seven o'clock having struck, without my being able to discover anything or any person connected with our project, I procured a pit ticket, in order to ascertain if Manon and G—— M—— were in the boxes. Neither one nor the other could I find. I returned to the door, where I again stopped for a quarter of an hour, in an agony of impatience and uneasiness. No person appeared, and I went back to the coach, without knowing what to conjecture. The coachman, seeing me, advanced a few paces towards me, and said, with a mysterious air, that a very handsome young person had been waiting more than an hour for me in the coach; that she described me so exactly that he could not be mistaken, and having learned that I intended to return, she said she would enter the coach, and wait with patience.

I felt confident that it was Manon. I approached. I beheld a very pretty face, certainly, but alas, not hers. The lady asked, in a voice that I had never before heard, whether she had the honor of speaking to the Chevalier des Grieux? I answered, That is my name.—I have a letter for you, said she, which will tell you what has brought me here, and by what means I learned your name. I begged she would allow me a few moments to read it, in an adjoining café. She proposed to follow me, and advised me to ask for a private room, to which I consented. Who is the writer of this letter? I inquired. She referred me to the letter itself.

I recognized Manon's hand. This is nearly the substance of the letter: G—— M—— had received her with a politeness and magnificence beyond anything she had previously conceived. He had loaded her with the most gorgeous presents. She had the prospect of almost imperial splendor. She assured me, however, that she could not

forget me amidst all this magnificence; but that, not being able to prevail on G—— M—— to take her that evening to the play, she was obliged to defer the pleasure of seeing me; and that, as a slight consolation for the disappointment which she feared this might cause me, she had found a messenger in one of the loveliest girls in all Paris. She signed herself, Your loving and constant, MANON LESCAUT.

There was something so cruel and insulting in the letter, that, what between indignation and grief, I resolutely determined to forget eternally my ungrateful and perjured mistress. I looked at the young woman who stood before me: she was exceedingly pretty, and I could have wished that she had been sufficiently so to render me inconstant in my turn. But there were wanting those lovely and languishing eyes, that divine gracefulness, that exquisite complexion, in fine, those innumerable charms which nature had so profusely lavished upon the perfidious Manon. No, no, said I, turning away from her; the ungrateful wretch who sent you knew in her heart that she was sending you on a useless errand. Return to her; and tell her from me, to triumph in her crime, and enjoy it, if she can, without remorse. I abandon her in despair, and, at the same time, renounce all women, who, without her fascination, are no doubt her equals in baseness and infidelity.

I was then on the point of going away, determined never to bestow another thought on Manon; the mortal jealousy that was racking my heart lay concealed under a dark and sullen melancholy, and I fancied, because I felt none of those violent emotions which I had experienced upon former occasions that I had shaken off my thraldom. Alas! I was even at that moment infinitely more the dupe of Love, than of G—— M—— and Manon.

The girl who had brought the letter, seeing me about to depart, asked me what I wished her to say to M. G—— M——, and to the lady who was with him? At this question, I stepped back again into the room, and by one of those unaccountable transitions that are only known to the victims of violent passion, I passed in an instant from the state of subdued tranquillity which I have just described, into an ungovernable fury.—Away! said I to her; tell the traitor G—— M—— and his abandoned mistress the state of despair into which your accursed mission has cast me; but warn them that it shall not be long a source of amusement to them, and that my own hands *shall be warmed* with the heart's blood of both! I sank

back upon a chair; my hat fell on one side, and my cane upon the other: torrents of bitter tears rolled down my cheeks. The paroxysm of rage changed into a profound and silent grief: I did nothing but weep and sigh.—Approach, my child, approach, said I to the young girl; approach, since it is you they have sent to bring me comfort; tell me whether you have any balm to administer for the pangs of despair and rage—any argument to offer against the crime of self-destruction, which I have resolved upon, after ridding the world of two perfidious monsters. Yes, approach, continued I, perceiving that she advanced with timid and doubtful steps; come and dry my sorrows; come and restore peace to my mind! come and tell me that at least you love me: you are handsome,—I may perhaps love you in return. The poor child, who was only sixteen or seventeen years of age, and who appeared more modest than girls of her class generally are, was thunderstruck at this unusual scene. She, however, gently approached to caress me, when with uplifted hands I rudely repulsed her.—What do you wish with me? exclaimed I to her. Ah! you are a woman, and of a sex I abhor, and can no longer tolerate; the very gentleness of your look threatens me with some new treason. Go, leave me here alone! She made me a curtesy without uttering a word, and turned to go out. I called to her to stop: Tell me at least, said I, wherefore,—how,—with what design they sent you here? how did you discover my name, or the place where you could find me?

She told me that she had long known M. G—— M——; that he had sent for her that evening about five o'clock; and that, having followed the servant who had been despatched to her, she was shown into a large house, where she found him playing at picquet with a beautiful young woman; and that they both charged her to deliver the letter into my hands, after telling her that she would find me in a hackney-coach at the bottom of the street of St. André. I asked if they had said nothing more. She blushed while she replied, that they had certainly made her believe that I should be glad of her society.—They have deceived you too, said I, my poor girl,—they have deceived you; you are a woman, and probably wish for a lover; but you must find one who is rich and happy, and it is not here you will find him. Return, return to M. *G—— M——*; he possesses everything requisite to make a *man beloved.* He has furnished houses and equipages to

bestow, while I, who have nothing but constancy of love to offer, am despised for my poverty, and laughed at for my simplicity.

I continued in a tone of sorrow or violence, as these feelings alternatively took possession of my mind. However, by the very excess of my agitation, I became gradually so subdued as to be able calmly to reflect upon the situation of affairs. I compared this new misfortune with those which I had already experienced of the same kind, and I could not perceive that there was any more reason for despairing now than upon former occasions. I knew Manon: why then distress myself on account of a calamity, which I could not but have plainly foreseen? Why not rather think of seeing a remedy? there was yet time; I at least ought not to spare my own exertions, if I wished to avoid the bitter reproach of having contributed, by my own indolence, to my misery. I thereupon set about considering every means of raising a gleam of hope.

To attempt to take her by main force from the hands of G—— M—— was too desperate a project, calculated only to ruin me, and without the slightest probability of succeeding. But it seemed to me that if I could ensure a moment's interview with her, I could not fail to regain my influence over her affections. I so well knew how to excite her sensibilities! I was so confident of her love for me! The very whim even of sending me a pretty woman by way of consoling me, I would stake my existence, was her idea, and that it was the suggestion of her own sincere sympathy for my sufferings.

I resolved to exert every nerve to procure an interview. After a multitude of plans which I canvassed one after another, I fixed upon the following:—M. de T—— had shown so much sincerity in the services he had rendered me, that I could not entertain a doubt of his zeal and good faith. I proposed to call upon him at once, and make him send for G—— M——, under pretence of some important business. Half an hour would suffice to enable me to see Manon. I thought it would not be difficult to get introduced to her apartment during G—— M——'s absence.

This determination pacified me, and I gave a liberal present to the girl, who was still with me; and in order to prevent her from returning to those who had sent her, I took down her address, and half promised to call upon her at a later hour. I then got into the hackney-coach, and

drove quickly to M. de T——'s. I was fortunate enough to find him at home. I had been apprehensive upon this point as I went along. A single sentence put him in possession of the whole case, as well of my sufferings, as of the friendly service I had come to supplicate at his hands.

He was so astonished to learn that G—— M—— had been able to take Manon from me, that, not being aware that I had myself lent a hand to my own misfortune, he generously offered to assemble his friends, and evoke their aid for the deliverance of my mistress. I told him that such a proceeding might by its publicity be attended with danger to Manon and to me.—Let us risk our lives, said I, only as a last resource. My plan is of a more peaceful nature, and promising at least equal success. He entered without a murmur into all that I proposed! so again stating that all that I required was, that he should send for G—— M——, and contrive to keep him an hour or two from home, we at once set about our operations.

We first of all considered what expedient we could make use of for keeping him out so long a time. I proposed that he should write a note dated from a café, begging of him to come there as soon as possible upon an affair of too urgent importance to admit of delay. I will watch, added I, the moment he quits the house, and introduce myself without any difficulty, being only known to Manon, and my servant Marcel. You can at the same time tell G—— M—— that the important affair upon which you wished to see him, was the immediate want of a sum of money; that you had just emptied your purse at play, and that you had played on, with continued bad luck, upon credit. He will require some time to take you to his father's house, where he keeps his money, and I shall have quite sufficient for the execution of my plan.

M. de T—— minutely adhered to these directions. I left him in a café, where he at once wrote his letter. I took my station close by Manon's house. I saw T——'s messenger arrive, and G—— M—— come out the next moment, followed by a servant. Allowing him barely time to get out of the street, I advanced to my deceiver's door, and notwithstanding the anger I felt, I knocked with as much respect as at the portal of a church. Fortunately it was Marcel who opened for me. Although I had nothing to apprehend from the other servants, I asked him in a low voice, if he could conduct me unseen into the room in which Manon was. He said that was easily done, by merely as-

cending the great staircase. Come then at once, said I to him, and endeavor to prevent any one from coming up while I am there. I reached the apartment without any difficulty.

Manon was reading. I had there an opportunity of admiring the singular character of this girl. Instead of being nervous or alarmed at my appearance, she scarcely betrayed a symptom of surprise, which few persons, however indifferent, could restrain, on seeing one whom they imagined to be far distant.—Ah! it is you, my dear love, said she, approaching to embrace me with her usual tenderness. Good Heavens, how venturesome and fooolhardy you are! Who could have expected to see you in this place? Instead of embracing her in return, I repulsed her with indignation, and retreated two or three paces from her. This evidently disconcerted her. She remained immovable, and fixed her eyes on me, while she changed color.

I was in reality so delighted to behold her once more, that, with so much real cause for anger, I could hardly bring my lips to upbraid her. My heart, however, felt the cruel outrage she had inflicted upon me. I endeavored to revive the recollection of it in my own mind, in order to excite my feelings, and put on a look of stern indignation. I remained silent for a few moments, when I remarked that she observed my agitation, and trembled: apparently the effect of her fears.

I could no longer endure this spectacle.—Ah! Manon, said I to her in the mildest tone, faithless and perjured Manon! How am I to complain of your conduct? I see you pale and trembling; and I am still so much alive to your slightest sufferings, that I am unwilling to add to them by my reproaches. But, Manon, I tell you that my heart is pierced with sorrow at your treatment of me,—treatment that is seldom inflicted but with the purpose of destroying one's life. This is the third time, Manon; I have kept a correct account; it is impossible to forget that. It is now for you to consider what course you will adopt, for my afflicted heart is no longer capable of sustaining such shocks. I know and feel that it must give way, and it is at this moment ready to burst with grief. I can say no more, added I, throwing myself into a chair; I have hardly strength to speak, or to support myself.

She made me no reply; but when I was seated, she sank down upon her knees, and rested her head upon my lap, covering her face with her hands. I perceived in a moment

that she was shedding floods of tears. Heavens! with what conflicting sensations was I at that instant agitated! Ah! Manon, Manon, said I, sighing, it is too late to give me tears after the death-blow you have inflicted. You affect a sorrow which you cannot feel. The greatest of your misfortunes is no doubt my presence, which has been always an obstacle to your happiness. Open your eyes; look up and see who it is that is here; you will not throw away tears of tenderness upon an unhappy wretch, whom you have betrayed and abandoned.

She kissed my hands without changing her position. Inconstant Manon, said I again, ungrateful and faithless girl, where now are all your promises and your vows? Capricious and cruel that you are! what has now become of the love that you protested for me this very day? Just Heavens, added I, is it thus you permit a traitor to mock you, after having called you so solemnly to witness her vows! Recompense and reward then are for the perjured! Despair and neglect are the lot of fidelity and truth!

These words conveyed even to my own mind a sentiment so bitterly severe, that, in spite of myself, some tears escaped from me. Manon perceived this by the change in my voice. She at length spoke. I must have indeed done something most culpable, said she, sobbing with grief, to have excited and annoyed you to this degree; but, I call Heaven to attest my utter unconsciousness of crime, and my innocence of all criminal intention!

This speech struck me as so devoid of reason and of truth, that I could not restrain a lively feeling of anger. Horrible hypocrisy! cried I; I see more plainly than ever that you are dishonest and treacherous. Now at length I learn your wretched disposition. Adieu, base creature, said I rising from my seat; I would prefer death a thousand times rather than continue to hold the slightest communication with you. May Heaven punish me, if I ever again waste upon you the smallest regard! Live on with your new lover,—renounce all feelings of honor,—detest me,—your love is now a matter to me of utter insignificance!

Manon was so terrified by the violence of my anger, that, remaining on her knees by the chair from which I had just before risen, breathless and trembling, she fixed her eyes upon me. I advanced a little farther towards the door, but, unless I had lost the spark of humanity, I could not continue longer unmoved by such a spectacle.

So far indeed was I from this kind of stoical indiffer-

ence, that, rushing at once into the very opposite extreme, I returned, or rather flew back to her without an instant's reflection. I lifted her in my arms; I gave her a thousand tender kisses; I implored her to pardon my ungovernable temper; I confessed that I was an absolute brute, and unworthy of being loved by such an angel.

I made her sit down, and throwing myself, in my turn, upon my knees, I conjured her to listen to me in that attitude. Then I briefly expressed all that a submissive and impassioned lover could say most tender and respectful. I supplicated her pardon. She let her arms fall over my neck, as she said that it was she who stood in need of forgiveness, and begged of me in mercy to forget all the annoyances she had caused me, and that she began, with reason, to fear that I should not approve of what she had to say in her justification. Me! said I, interrupting her impatiently; I require no justification; I approve of all you have done. It is not for me to demand excuses for anything you do; I am but too happy, too contented, if my dear Manon will only leave me master of her affections! But, continued I, remembering that it was the crisis of my fate,—may I not, Manon, all-powerful Manon, you who wield at your pleasure my joys and sorrows, may I not be permitted, after having conciliated you by my submission and all the signs of repentance, to speak to you now of my misery and distress? May I now learn from your own lips what my destiny is to be, and whether you are resolved to sign my death-warrant, by spending even a single night with my rival?

She considered a moment before she replied. My good Chevalier, said she, resuming the most tranquil tone, if you had only at first explained yourself thus distinctly, you would have spared yourself a world of trouble, and prevented a scene that has really annoyed me. Since your distress is the result of jealousy, I could at first have cured that by offering to accompany you where you pleased. But I imagined it was caused by the letter which I was obliged to write in the presence of G—— M——, and of the girl whom we sent with it. I thought you might have construed that letter into a mockery; and have fancied that, by sending such a messenger, I meant to announce my abandonment of you for the sake of G—— M——. It was this idea that at once overwhelmed me with grief; for, innocent as I knew myself to be, I could not but allow that appearances were against me. However, continued sh

I will leave you to judge of my conduct, after I shall have explained the whole truth.

She then told me all that had occurred to her after joining G—— M——, whom she found punctually awaiting her arrival. He had in fact received her in the most princely style. He showed her through all the apartments, which were fitted up in the neatest and most correct taste. He had counted out to her in her boudoir ten thousand francs, as well as a quantity of jewels, amongst which were the identical pearl necklace and bracelets which she had once before received as a present from his father. He then led her into a splendid room, which she had not before seen, and in which an exquisite collation was served; she was waited upon by the new servants, whom he had hired purposely for her, and whom he now desired to consider themselves as exclusively her attendants; the carriage and the horses were afterwards paraded, and he then proposed a game of cards, until supper should be announced.

I acknowledge, continued Manon, that I was dazzled by all this magnificence. It struck me that it would be madness to sacrifice at once so many good things for the mere sake of carrying off the money and the jewels already in my possession; that it was a certain fortune made for both you and me, and that we might pass the remainder of our lives most agreeably and comfortably at the expense of G—— M——.

Instead of proposing the theater, I thought it more prudent to sound his feelings with regard to you, in order to ascertain what facilities we should have for meeting in future, on the supposition that I could carry my project into effect. I found him of a most tractable disposition. He asked me how I felt towards you, and if I had not experienced some compunction at quitting you. I told him that you were so truly amiable, and had ever treated me with such undeviating kindness, that it was impossible I could hate you. He admitted that you were a man of merit, and expressed an ardent desire to gain your friendship.

He was anxious to know how I thought you would take my elopement, particularly when you should learn that I was in his hands. I answered, that our love was of such long standing as to have had time to moderate a little; that, besides, you were not in very easy circumstances, and would probably not consider my departure as any severe misfortune, inasmuch as it would relieve you from a burden

of no very insignificant nature. I added that, being perfectly convinced you would take the whole matter rationally, I had not hesitated to tell you that I had some business in Paris; that you had at once consented, and that having accompanied me yourself, you did not seem very uneasy when we separated.

If I thought, said he to me, that he could bring himself to live on good terms with me, I should be too happy to make him a tender of my services and attentions. I assured him that, from what I knew of your disposition, I had no doubt you would acknowledge his kindness in a congenial spirit: especially, I added, if he could assist you in your affairs, which had become embarassed since your disagreement with your family. He interrupted me by declaring that he would gladly render you any service in his power; and that if you were disposed to form a new attachment, he would introduce you to an extremely pretty woman, whom he had just given up for me.

I approved of all he said, she added, for fear of exciting any suspicions; and being more and more satisfied of the feasibility of my scheme, I only longed for an opportunity of letting you into it, lest you should be alarmed at my not keeping my appointment. With this view I suggested the idea of sending this young lady to you, in order to have an opportunity of writing; I was obliged to have recourse to this plan, because I could not see a chance of his leaving me to myself for a moment.

He was greatly amused with my proposition; he called his valet, and asking him whether he could immediately find his late mistress, he despatched him at once in search of her. He imagined that she would have to go to Chaillot to meet you, but I told him that, when we parted, I promised to meet you again at the theater, or that, if anything should prevent me from going there, you were to wait for me in a coach at the end of the street of St. André; that consequently it would be best to send your new love there, if it were only to save you from the misery of suspense during the whole night. I said it would be also necessary to write you a line of explanation, without which you would probably be puzzled by the whole transaction. He consented; but I was obliged to write in his presence; and I took especial care not to explain matters too palpably in my letter.

This is the history, said Manon, of the entire affair. I conceal nothing from you, of either my conduct or my ir

tentions. The girl arrived; I thought her handsome; and as I doubted not that you would be mortified by my absence, I did most sincerely hope that she would be able to dissipate something of your *ennui;* for it is the fidelity of the heart alone that I value. I should have been too delighted to have sent Marcel, but I could not for a single instant find an opportunity of telling him what I wished to communicate to you. She finished her story by describing the embarrassment into which M. de T——'s letter had thrown G—— M——; he hesitated, said she, about leaving, and assured me that he should not be long absent; and it is on this account that I am uneasy at seeing you here, and that I betrayed, at your appearance, some slight feeling of surprise.

I listened to her with great patience. There were certainly parts of her recital sufficiently cruel and mortifying; for the intention, at least, of the infidelity was so obvious, that she had not even taken the trouble to disguise it. However, I considered myself as partly the cause of her guilt, by having been the first to let her know G—— M——'s sentiments towards her, and by the silly readiness with which I entered into this rash project. Besides, by a natural bent of my mind, peculiar I believe to myself, I was duped by the ingenuousness of her story,—by that open and winning manner with which she related even the circumstances most calculated to annoy me. There is nothing of wanton vice, said I to myself, in her transgressions; she is volatile and imprudent, but she is sincere and affectionate. My love alone rendered me blind to all of her faults. I was enchanted at the prospect of rescuing her that very night from my rival. I said to her: With whom do you mean to pass the night? She was evidently disconcerted by the question, and answered me in an embarrassed manner with *buts* and *ifs.*

I felt for her, and interrupted her by saying that I at once expected her to accompany me.

Nothing can give me more pleasure, said she; but you don't approve then of my project?

Is it not enough, replied I, that I approve of all that you have, up to this moment, done?

What, said she, are we not even to take the ten thousand francs with us? Why, he gave me the money; it is mine.

I advised her to leave everything, and let us think only of escaping; for although I had been hardly half an hour with her, I began to dread the return of G—— M——. However,

e so earnestly urged me to consent to our going out with
:nething in our pockets, that I thought myself bound to
ıke her, on my part, some concession, in return for all she
:lded to me.

While we were getting ready for our departure, I heard
:ne one knock at the street door. I felt convinced that it
ıst be G—— M——; and in the heat of the moment, I
d Manon, that as sure as he appeared I would take his
e. In truth, I felt that I was not sufficiently recovered
ɔm my late excitement, to be able to restrain my fury if
net him. Marcel put an end to my uneasiness, by hand-
; me a letter which he had received for me at the door;
was from M. de T——.

He told me that, as G—— M—— had gone to his father's
use for the money which he wanted, he had taken advan-
ge of his absence to communicate to me an amusing idea
ıt had just come into his head;—that it appeared to him,
:ould not possibly take a more agreeable revenge upon my
'al, than by eating his supper. This seemed to him easy
ough, if I could only find two or three men, upon whom I
uld depend, of courage sufficient to stop him in the street,
d detain him in custody until next morning; that he would
dertake to keep him occupied for another hour at least,
der some pretext, which he could devise before G——
——'s return.

I showed the note to Manon; I told her at the same time
the manner in which I had procured the interview with
r. My scheme, as well as the new one of M. de T——'s,
lighted her; we laughed heartily at it for some minutes;
t when I treated it as a mere joke, I was surprised at her
isting seriously upon it, as a thing perfectly practicable,
d too delightful to be neglected. In vain I inquired where
e thought I could possibly find, on a sudden, men fit for
:h an adventure? and on whom I could rely for keeping
—— M—— in strict custody? She said that I should at
st try, as M. de T—— insured us yet a full hour; and as
my other objections, she said I was playing the tyrant,
d did not show the slightest indulgence to her fancies.
e said that it was impossible there could be a more en-
anting project: You will have his place at supper; and
morrow, as early as you like, you can walk off with both
mistress and his money. You may thus, at one blow, be
ıply revenged upon father and son.

I *yielded to her* entreaties, in spite of the secret misgiv-
s of my own mind, which seemed to forebode the un-

happy catastrophe that afterwards befell me. I went out with the intention of asking two or three guardsmen, with whom Lescaut had made me acquainted, to undertake the arrest of G—— M——. I found only one of them at home, but he was a fellow ripe for any adventure; and he no sooner heard our plan, than he assured me of certain success: all he required was six pistols, to reward the three private soldiers whom he determined to employ in the business. I begged him to lose no time. He got them together in less than a quarter of an hour. I waited at his lodgings till he returned with them, and then conducted him to the corner of a street, through which I knew G—— M—— must pass on going back to Manon's house. I requested him not to treat G—— M—— roughly, but to keep him confined, and so strictly watched, until seven o'clock next morning, that I might be free from all apprehension of his escape. He told me his intention was to bring him a prisoner to his own room, and make him undress and sleep in his bed, while he and his gallant comrades should spend the night in drinking and playing.

I remained with them until we saw G—— M—— returning homewards; and I then withdrew a few steps into a dark recess in the street, to enjoy so entertaining and extraordinary a scene. The officer challenged him with a pistol to his breast, and then told him, in a civil tone, that he did not want either his money or his life; but that if he hesitated to follow him, or if he gave the slightest alarm, he would blow his brains out. G—— M—— seeing that his assailant was supported by three soldiers, and perhaps not uninfluenced by a dread of the pistol, yielded without further resistance. I saw him led away like a lamb.

CHAPTER X

"What lost a world, and bade a hero fly?
The timid tear in Cleopatra's eye.
Yet be the soft triumvir's fault forgiven,
By this, how many lose—not earth—but heaven!
Consign their souls to man's eternal foe,
And seal their own, to spare some wanton's woe!"
—BYRON.

I SOON returned to Manon; and to prevent the servants from having any suspicion, I told her in their hearing that she need not expect M. G—— M—— to supper; that he was most reluctantly occupied with business which detained him, and that he had commissioned me to come and make his excuses, and to fill his place at the supper table; which, in the company of so beautiful a lady, I could not but consider a very high honor. She seconded me with her usual adroitness. We sat down to supper. I put on the most serious air I could assume, while the servants were in the room, and at length having got rid of them, we passed, beyond all comparison, the most agreeable evening of my life. I gave Marcel orders to find a hackney-coach, and engage it to be at the gate on the following morning a little before six o'clock. I pretended to take leave of Manon about midnight, but easily gaining admission again, through Marcel, I proceeded to occupy G—— M——'s room, as I had filled his place at the supper-table.

In the meantime our evil genius was at work for our destruction. We were like children enjoying the success of our silly scheme, while the sword hung suspended over our heads. The thread which upheld it was just about to break; but the better to understand all the circumstances of our ruin, it is necessary to know the immediate cause.

G—— M—— was followed by a servant, when he was stopped by my friend the guardsman. Alarmed by what he saw, this fellow retraced his steps, and the first thing he did was to go and inform old G—— M—— of what had just happened.

Such a piece of news of course excited him greatly. This

was his only son; and considering the old gentleman's advanced age, he was extremely active and ardent. He first inquired of the servant what his son had been doing that afternoon; whether he had had any quarrel on his own account, or interfered in any other; whether he had been in any suspicious house. The lacquey, who fancied his master in imminent danger, and thought he ought not to have any reserve in such an emergency, disclosed at once all that he knew of his connection with Manon, and of the expense he had gone to on her account; the manner in which he had passed the afternoon with her until about nine o'clock, the circumstance of his leaving her, and the outrage he encountered on his return. This was enough to convince him that his son's affair was a love quarrel. Although it was then at least half-past ten at night, he determined at once to call on the lieutenant of police. He begged of him to issue immediate orders to all the detachments that were out on duty, and he himself, taking some men with him, hastened to the street where his son had been stopped: he visited every place where he thought he might have a chance of finding him; and not being able to discover the slightest trace of him, he went off to the house of his mistress, to which he thought he probably might by this time have returned.

I was stepping into bed when he arrived. The door of the chamber being closed, I did not hear the knock at the gate, but he rushed into the house, accompanied by two archers of the guard, and after fruitless inquiries of the servants about his son, he resolved to try whether he could get any information from their mistress. He came up to the apartment, still accompanied by the guard. We were just on the point of lying down when he burst open the door, and electrified us by his appearance. Heavens! said I to Manon, it is old G—— M——. I attempted to get possession of my sword; but it was unfortunately entangled in my belt. The archers, who saw my object, advanced to lay hold of me. Stript to my shirt, I could of course offer no resistance, and they speedily deprived me of all means of defense.

G—— M——, although a good deal embarrassed by the whole scene, soon recognized me; and Manon still more easily. Is this a dream? said he, in the most serious tone —do I not see before me the Chevalier des Grieux and Manon Lescaut? I was so overcome with shame and disappointment, that I could make him no reply. He appeared for some minutes revolving different thoughts in his mind;

and, as if they had suddenly excited his anger, he exclaimed, addressing himself to me: Wretch! I am confident that you have murdered my son!

I felt indignant at so insulting a charge. You villain, I exclaimed, if I had been inclined to kill any of your worthless family, it is with you I should most assuredly have commenced.

Hold him fast, cried he to the archers; he must give me some tidings of my son; I shall have him hanged to-morrow, if he does not presently let me know how he has disposed of him.

You will have me hanged, said I, will you? Infamous scoundrel! it is for such as you that the gibbet is erected. Know that the blood which flows in my veins is noble, and purer in every sense than yours. Yes, I added, I *do* know what has happened to your son; and if you irritate me farther, I will have him strangled before morning; and I promise you the consolation of meeting in your own person the same fate, after he is disposed of.

I was imprudent in acknowledging that I knew where his son was, but excess of anger made me commit this indiscretion. He immediately called in five or six other archers, who were waiting at the gate, and ordered them to take all the servants into custody. Ah! ah! Chevalier, said he, in a tone of sardonic raillery,—so you know where my son is, and you will have him strangled, you say? We will try to set that matter to rights.

I now saw the folly I had committed.

He approached Manon, who was sitting upon the bed, bathed in a flood of tears. He said something, with the most cruel irony, of the despotic power she wielded over old and young, father and son,—her edifying dominion over her empire. This superannuated monster actually attempted to take liberties with her.

Take care, exclaimed I, how you lay a finger upon her! —neither divine nor human law will be able, should your folly arouse it, to shield you from my vengeance!

He quitted the room, desiring the archers to make us dress as quickly as possible.

I know not what were his intentions at that moment with regard to us: we might perhaps have regained our liberty if we had told him where his son was. As I dressed, I considered whether this would not be the wisest course. But if, on quitting the room, such had been the disposition of his mind, it was very different when he returned. He had first

gone to question Manon's servants, who were in the custody of the guard. From those who had been expressly hired for her service by his son, he could learn nothing; but when he found that Marcel had been previously our servant, he determined to extract some information from him, by means of intimidation, threats, or bribes.

This lad was faithful, but weak and unsophisticated. The remembrance of what he had done at the Penitentiary for Manon's release, joined to the terror with which G—— M—— now inspired him, so subdued his mind, that he thought they were about leading him to the gallows, or the rack. He promised that, if they would spare his life, he would disclose everything he knew. The speech made G—— M—— imagine that there was something more serious in the affair than he had before supposed; he not only gave Marcel a promise of his life, but a handsome reward in hand for his intended confession.

The booby then told him the leading features of our plot, of which we had made no secret before him, as he was himself to have borne a part in it. True, he knew nothing of the alterations we had made at Paris in our original design; but he had been informed, before quitting Chaillot, of our projected adventure, and of the part he was to perform. He therefore told him that the object was to make a dupe of his son; and that Manon was to receive, if she had not already received, ten thousand francs, which, according to our project, would be effectually lost to G—— M——, his heirs and assigns for ever.

Having acquired this information, the old gentleman hastened back in a rage to the apartment. Without uttering a word, he passed into the boudoir, where he easily put his hand upon the money and the jewels. He then accosted us bursting with rage; and holding up what he was pleased to call our plunder, he loaded us with the most indignant reproaches. He placed close to Manon's eye the pearl necklace and bracelets. Do you recognize them? said he, in a tone of mockery; it is not, perhaps, the first time you may have seen them. The identical pearls, by my faith! They were selected by your own exquisite taste! The poor innocents! added he; they really are most amiable creatures, both one and the other; but they are perhaps a little too much inclined to roguery.

I could hardly contain my indignation at this speech. I would have given for one moment's liberty—Heavens! what would I not have given? At length, I suppressed my feel

ings sufficiently to say in a tone of moderation, which was but the refinement of rage: Put an end, sir, to this insolent mockery! What is your object? What do you purpose doing with us?

M. Chevalier, he answered, my object is to see you quietly lodged in the prison of Le Châtelet. To-morrow will bring daylight with it, and we shall then be able to take a clearer view of matters; and I hope you will at last do me the favor to let me know where my son is.

It did not require much consideration to feel convinced that our incarceration in Le Châtelet would be a serious calamity. I foresaw all the dangers that would ensue. In spite of my pride, I plainly saw the necessity of bending before my fate, and conciliating my most implacable enemy by submission. I begged him, in the quietest manner, to listen to me. I wish to do myself but common justice, sir, said I to him; I admit that my youth has led me into egregious follies; and that you have had fair reason to complain: but if you have ever felt the resistless power of love, if you can enter into the sufferings of an unhappy young man, from whom all that he most loved was ravished, you may think me perhaps not so culpable in seeking the gratification of an innocent revenge; or at least, you may consider me sufficiently punished, by the exposure and degradation I have just now endured. Neither pains nor imprisonment will be requisite to make me tell you where you son now is. He is in perfect safety. It was never my intention to injure him, nor to give you just cause for offense. I am ready to let you know the place where he is safely passing the night, if, in return, you will set us at liberty.

The old tiger, far from being softened by my prayer, turned his back upon me, and laughed. A few words escaped him, which showed that he perfectly well knew our whole plan from the commencement. As for his son, the brute said that he would easily find him, since I had not assassinated him. Conduct them to the Petit-Châtelet, said he to the archers; and take especial care that the chevalier does not escape you: he is a scamp that once before escaped from St. Lazare.

He went out, and left me in a condition that you may picture to yourself. O Heavens! cried I to myself, I receive with humble submission all your visitations; but that a wretched scoundrel should thus have the power to tyrannize over me; this it is that plunges me into the depths of despair! The archers begged that we would not detain them

any longer. They had a coach at the door.—Come, my dear angel, said I to Manon, as we went down, come, let us submit to our destiny in all its rigor: it may one day please Heaven to render us more happy.

We went in the same coach. I supported her in my arms. I had not heard her utter a single word since G—— M——'s first appearance: but now, finding herself alone with me, she addressed me in the tenderest manner, and accused herself of being the cause of all my troubles. I assured her that I never could complain while she continued to love me. It is not I that have reason to complain, I added; imprisonment for a few months has no terrors for me, and I would infinitely prefer Le Châtelèt to St. Lazare; but it is for you, my dearest soul, that my heart bleeds. What a lot for such an angel! How can you, gracious Heaven! subject to such rigor the most perfect work of your own hands? Why are we not both of us born with qualities conformable to our wretched condition? We are endowed with spirit, with taste, with feeling; while the vilest of God's creatures,—brutes, alone worthy of our unhappy fate,—are revelling in all the favors of fortune.

These feelings filled me with grief; but it was bliss, compared with my prospects for the future. My fear, on account of Manon, knew no bounds. She had already been an inmate of the Magdalen; and even if she had left it by fair means, I knew that a relapse of this nature would be attended with disastrous consequences. I wished to let her know my fears: I was apprehensive of exciting hers. I trembled for her, without daring to put her on her guard against the danger; and I embraced her tenderly, to satisfy her, at least, of my love, which was almost the only sentiment to which I dared to give expression.—Manon, said I, tell me sincerely, will you ever cease to love me?

She answered that it made her unhappy to think that I could doubt it.

Very well, replied I, I do so no longer; and with this conviction, I may well defy all my enemies. Through the influence of my family, I can ensure my own liberation from the Châtelet; and my life will be of little use, and of short duration, if I do not succeed in rescuing you.

We arrived at the prison, where they put us into separate cells. This blow was the less severe, because I was prepared for it. I recommended Manon to the attention of the porter, telling him that I was a person of some distinction, and promising him a considerable recompense. I embraced my

dearest mistress before we parted; I implored her not to distress herself too much, and to fear nothing while I lived. I had money with me: I gave her some; and I paid the porter out of what remained, the amount of a month's expenses for both of us in advance. This had an excellent effect, for I found myself placed in an apartment comfortably furnished, and they assured me that Manon was in one equally good.

I immediately set about devising the means of procuring my liberty. There certainly had not been anything actually criminal in my conduct; and supposing even that our felonious intention was established by the evidence of Marcel, I knew that criminal intentions alone were not punishable. I resolved to write immediately to my father, and beg of him to come himself to Paris. I felt much less humiliation, as I have already said, in being in Le Châtelet than in St. Lazare. Besides, although I preserved all proper respect for the paternal authority, age and experience had considerably lessened my timidity. I wrote, and they made no difficulty in the prison about forwarding my letter; but it was a trouble I should have spared myself had I known that my father was about to arrive on the following day in Paris.

He had received the letter I had written to him a week before; it gave him extreme delight; but, notwithstanding the flattering hopes I had held out of my conversion, he could not implicity rely on my statements. He determined therefore to satisfy himself of my reformation by the evidence of his own senses, and to regulate his conduct towards me according to his conviction of my sincerity. He arrived the day after my imprisonment.

His first visit was to Tiberge, to whose care I begged that he would address his answer. He could not learn from him either my present abode or condition: Tiberge merely told him of my principal adventures since I had escaped from St. Lazare. Tiberge spoke warmly of the disposition to virtue which I had evinced at our last interview. He added, that he considered me as having quite got rid of Manon; but that he was nevertheless surprised at my not having given him any intelligence about myself for a week. My father was not to be duped. He fully comprehended that there was something in the silence of which Tiberge complained, which had escaped my poor friend's penetration; and he took such pains to find me out, that in two days after his arrival he learned that I was in Le Châtelet.

Before I received this visit, which I little expected so soon, I had the honor of one from the lieutenant-general of

police, or, to call things by their right names, I was subjected to an official examination. He upbraided me certainly, but not in any harsh or annoying manner. He told me, in the kindest tone, that he bitterly lamented my bad conduct; that I had committed a gross indiscretion in making an enemy of such a man as M. G—— M——; that in truth it was easy to see that there was in the affair more of imprudence and folly than of malice; but that still it was the second time I had been brought as a culprit under his cognizance; and that he had hoped I should have become more sedate, after the experience of two or three months in St. Lazare.

Delighted at finding that I had a rational judge to deal with, I explained the affair to him in a manner at once so respectful and so moderate, that he seemed exceedingly satisfied with my answers to all the queries he put. He desired me not to abandon myself to grief, and assured me that he felt every disposition to serve me, as well on account of my birth as my inexperience. I ventured to bespeak his attentions in favor of Manon, and I dwelt upon her gentle and excellent disposition. He replied, with a smile, that he had not yet seen her, but that she had been represented to him as a most dangerous person. This expression so excited my sympathy, that I urged a thousand anxious arguments in favor of my poor mistress, and I could not restrain even from shedding tears. He desired them to conduct me back to my chamber. Love! Love! cried this grave magistrate as I went out, thou art never to be reconciled with Discretion!

I had been occupied with the most melancholy reflections, and was thinking of the conversation I had had with the lieutenant-general of police, when I heard my door open. It was my father. Although I ought to have been half prepared for seeing him, and had reason to expect his arrival within a day or two, yet I was so thunder-struck, that I could willingly have sunk into the earth, if it had been open at my feet. I embraced him in the greatest possible state of confusion. He took a seat, without either one or other of us having uttered a word.

As I remained standing, with my head uncovered, and my eyes cast on the ground, Be seated, sir, said he in a solemn voice; be seated. I have to thank the notoriety of your debaucheries for learning the place of your abode. It is the privilege of such fame as yours, that it cannot lie concealed. You are acquiring celebrity by an unerring path. Doubtless

it will lead you to the Grève,[1] and you will then have the unfading glory of being held up to the admiration of the world.

I made no reply. He continued: What an unhappy lot is that of a father, who, having tenderly loved a child, and strained every nerve to bring him up a virtuous and respectable man, finds him turn out in the end a worthless profligate, who dishonors him. To an ordinary reverse of fortune one may be reconciled! time softens the affliction, and even the indulgence of sorrow itself is not unavailing; but what remedy is there for an evil that is perpetually augmenting, such as the profligacy of a vicious son, who has deserted every principle of honor, and is ever plunging from deep into deeper vice? You are silent, added he: look at this counterfeit modesty, this hypocritical air of gentleness! might he not pass for the most respectable member of his family?

Although I could not but feel that I deserved, in some degree, these reproaches, yet he appeared to me to carry them beyond all reason. I thought I might be permitted to explain my feelings.

I assure you, sir, said I to him, that the modesty which you ridicule is by no means affected; it is the natural feelings of a son who entertains sincere respect for his father, and above all, a father irritated as you justly are by his faults. Neither have I, sir, the slightest wish to pass for the most repsectable member of my family. I know that I have merited your reproaches, but I conjure you to temper them with mercy, and not to look upon me as the most infamous of mankind. I do not deserve such harsh names. It is love, you know it, that has caused all my errors. Fatal passion! Have you yourself never felt its force? Is it possible that you, with the same blood in your veins that flows in mine, should have passed through life unscathed by the same excitements? Love has rendered me perhaps foolishly tender,—too easily excited,—too impassioned,—too faithful, and probably too indulgent to the desires and caprices, or, if you will, the faults of an adored mistress. These are my crimes; are they such as to reflect dishonor upon you? Come, my dear father, said I tenderly, show some pity for a son, who has never ceased to feel respect

[1] "Who has e'er been at Paris must needs know the Grève,
The fatal retreat of th' unfortunate brave,
Where honor and justice most oddly contribute,
To ease heroes' pains by the halter and gibbet."—PRIOR.

and affection for you,—who has not renounced, as you say, all feelings of honor and of duty, and who is himself a thousand times more an object of pity than you imagine. I could not help shedding a tear as I concluded this appeal.

A father's heart is a *chef-d'œuvre* of creation. There Nature rules in undisturbed dominion, and regulates at will its most secret springs. He was a man of high feeling and good taste, and was so sensibly affected by the turn I had given to my defense, that he could no longer hide from me the change I had wrought.

Come to me, my poor chevalier, said he; come and embrace me. I do pity you!

I embraced him: he pressed me to him in such a manner, that I guessed what was passing in his heart.

But how are we, said he, to extricate you from this place? Explain to me the real situation of your affairs.

As there really was not anything in my conduct so grossly improper as to reflect dishonor upon me; at least, in comparison with the conduct of other young men of a certain station in the world; and as a mistress is not considered a disgrace, any more than a little dexterity in drawing some advantage from play, I gave my father a candid detail of the life I had been leading. As I recounted each transgression, I took care to cite some illustrious example in my justification, in order to palliate my own faults.

I lived, said I, with a mistress without the solemnity of marriage. The Duke of —— keeps two before the eyes of all Paris. M—— D—— has had one now for ten years, and loves her with a fidelity which he has never shown to his wife. Two-thirds of the men of fashion in Paris keep mistresses.

I certainly have on one or two occasions cheated at play. Well, the Marquis of —— and the Count —— have no other source of revenue. The Prince of —— and the Duke of —— are at the head of a gang of the same industrious order. As for the designs I had upon the pockets of the two G—— M——'s, I might just as easily have proved that I had abundant models for that also; but I had too much pride to plead guilty to this charge, and rest on the justification of example; so that I begged of my father to ascribe my weakness on this occasion to the violence of the two passions which agitated me—Revenge and Love.

He asked me whether I could suggest any means of obtaining my liberty, and in such a way as to avoid publicity as much as possible. I told him of the kind feelings which

the lieutenant-general of police had expressed towards me. If you encounter any obstacles, said I, they will be offered only by the two G—— M——'s; so that I think it would be advisable to call upon them. He promised to do so.

I did not dare ask him to solicit Manon's liberation; this was not from want of courage, but from the apprehension of exasperating him by such a proposition, and perhaps driving him to form some design fatal to the future happiness of us both. It remains to this hour a problem whether this fear on my part was not the immediate cause of all my most terrible misfortunes, by preventing me from ascertaining my father's disposition, and endeavoring to inspire him with favorable feelings towards my poor mistress: I might have perhaps once more succeeded in exciting his commiseration; I might have put him on his guard against the impression which he was sure of receiving from a visit to old G—— M——. But how can I tell what the consequences would have been! My unhappy fate would have most probably counteracted all my efforts; but it would have been a consolation to have had nothing else but that, and the cruelty of my enemies, to blame for my afflictions.

On quitting me, my father went to pay a visit to M. G—— M——. He found him with his son, whom the guardsman had safely restored to liberty. I never learned the particulars of their conversation; but I could easily infer them from the disastrous results. They went together (the two old gentlemen) to the lieutenant-general of police, from whom they requested one favor each: the first was to have me at once liberated from Le Châtelet; the second to condemn Manon to perpetual imprisonment, or to transport her for life to America. They happened, at that very period, to be sending out a number of convicts to the Mississippi. The lieutenant-general promised to have her embarked on board the first vessel that sailed.

M. G—— M—— and my father came together to bring me the news of my liberation. M. G—— M—— said something civil with reference to what had passed; and having congratulated me upon my happiness in having such a father, he exhorted me to profit henceforward by his instruction and example. My father desired me to express my sorrow for the injustice I had even contemplated against his family, and my gratitude for his having assisted in procuring my liberation.

We all left the prison together, without the mention of *Manon's name.* I dared not in their presence speak of her

to the turnkeys. Alas! all my entreaties in her favor would have been useless. The cruel sentence upon Manon had arrived at the same time as the warrant for my discharge. The unfortunate girl was conducted in an hour after to the hospital, to be there classed with some other wretched women, who had been condemned to the same punishment.

My father, having forced me to accompany him to the house where he was residing, it was near six o'clock before I had an opportunity of escaping his vigilance. In returning to Le Châtelet, my only wish was to convey some refreshments to Manon, and to recommend her to the attention of the porter; for I had no hope of being permitted to see her; nor had I, as yet, had time to reflect on the best means of rescuing her.

I asked for the porter. I had won his heart, as much by my liberality to him, as by the mildness of my manner; so that, having a disposition to serve me, he spoke of Manon's sentence as a calamity which he sincerely regretted, since it was calculated to mortify me. I was at first unable to comprehend his meaning. We conversed for some minutes without my understanding him. At length, perceiving that an explanation was necessary, he gave me such a one, as on a former occasion I wanted courage to relate to you, and which, even now, makes my blood curdle in my veins to remember.

CHAPTER XI

"'Alack! it is not when we sleep soft and wake merrily that we think on other people's sufferings; but when the hour of trouble comes,' said Jeanie Deans."—Walter Scott.

Never did apoplexy produce on mortal a more sudden or terrific effect than did the announcement of Manon's sentence upon me. I fell prostrate, with so intense a palpitation of the heart, that as I swooned I thought that death itself was come upon me. This idea continued even after I had been restored to my senses. I gazed around me upon every part of the room, then upon my own paralyzed limbs, doubting, in my delirium, whether I still bore about me the attributes of a living man. It is quite certain that, in obedience to the desire I felt of terminating my sufferings, even by my own hand, nothing could have been to me more welcome than death at that moment of anguish and despair. Religion itself could depict nothing more insupportable after death than the racking agony with which I was then convulsed. Yet, by a miracle, only within the power of omnipotent love, I soon regained strength enough to express my gratitude to Heaven for restoring me to sense and reason. My death could only have been a relief and blessing to myself; whereas Manon had occasion for my prolonged existence, in order to deliver her,—to succor her,—to avenge her wrongs: I swore to devote that existence unremittingly to these objects.

The porter gave me every assistance that I could have expected at the hands of my oldest friend; I accepted his services with the liveliest gratitude. Alas! said I to him, you then are affected by my sufferings! The whole world abandons me; my own father proves one of the very cruelest of my prosecutors; no person feels pity for me! You alone, in this abode of suffering and shame,—you alone exhibit compassion for the most wretched of mankind! He advised me not to appear in the street until I had recovered a little from my affliction. Do not stop me, said I, as I went out; we shall meet again sooner than you imagine: get ready your darkest dungeon, for I shall *shortly become its* tenant.

In fact, my first idea was nothing less than to make away with the two G—— M——'s, and the lieutenant-general of police; and then to attack the hospital, sword in hand, assisted by all whom I could enlist in my cause. Even my father's life was hardly respected, so just appeared my feelings of vengeance; for the porter had informed me that he and G—— M—— were jointly the authors of my ruin.

But when I had advanced some paces into the street, and the fresh air had cooled my excitement, I gradually viewed matters in a more rational mood. The death of our enemies could be of little use to Manon; and the obvious effect of such violence would be to deprive me of all other chance of serving her. Besides, could I ever bring myself to be a cowardly assassin? By what other means could I accomplish my revenge? I set all my ingenuity and all my efforts at work to procure the deliverance of Manon, leaving everything else to be considered hereafter when I had succeeded in this first and paramount object.

I had very little money left; money, however, was an indispensable basis for all my operations. I only knew three persons from whom I had any right to ask pecuniary assistance,—M. de T——, Tiberge, and my father. There appeared little chance of obtaining any from the two latter, and I was really ashamed again to importune M. de T——. But it is not in desperate emergencies that one stands upon points of ceremony. I went first to the seminary of St. Sulpice, without considering whether I should be recognized. I asked for Tiberge. His first words showed me that he knew nothing of my latest adventure: this made me change the design I had originally formed of appealing at once to his compassion. I spoke generally of the pleasure it had given me to see my father again; and I then begged of him to lend me some money, under the pretext of being anxious before I left Paris to pay a few little debts, which I wished to keep secret. He handed me his purse, without a single remark. I took twenty or twenty-five pounds, which it contained. I offered him my note of hand, but he was too generous to accept it.

I then went to M. de T——: I had no reserve with him. I plainly told him my misfortunes and distress: he already knew everything, and had informed himself even of the most trifling circumstance, on account of the interest he *naturally took* in young G—— M——'s adventure. He *however listened* to me, and seemed sincerely to lament

what had occurred. When I consulted him as to the best means of rescuing Manon, he answered that he saw such little ground for hope, that without some extraordinary interposition of Providence, it would be folly to expect relief; that he had paid a visit expressly to the hospital since Manon had been transferred from the Châtelet, but that he could not even obtain permission to see her, as the lieutenant-general of police had given the strictest orders to the contrary; and that, to complete the catastrophe, the unfortunate train of convicts, in which she was to be included, was to take its departure from Paris the day but one after.

I was so confounded by what he said, that if he had gone on speaking for another hour, I should not have interrupted him. He continued to tell me, that the reason of his not calling to see me at the Châtelet was, that he hoped to be of more use by appearing to be unknown to me; that for the last few hours, since I had been set at liberty, he had in vain looked for me, in order to suggest the only plan through which he could see a hope of averting Manon's fate. He told me it was dangerous counsel to give, and implored me never to mention the part he took in it! it was to find some enterprising fellows, gallant enough to attack Manon's guard on getting outside the barrière. Nor did he wait for me to urge a plea of poverty. Here is fifty pounds, he said, presenting me his purse; it may be of use to you; you can repay me when you are in better circumstances. He added, that if the fear of losing his character did not prevent him from embarking in such an enterprise, he would have willingly put his sword and his life at my service.

This unlooked-for generosity affected me to tears. I expressed my gratitude with as much warmth as my depressed spirits left at my command. I asked him if there were nothing to be expected from interceding with the lieutenant-general of police: he said that he had considered that point; but that he looked upon it as a hopeless attempt, because a favor of that nature was never accorded without some strong motive, and he did not see what inducement could be held out for engaging the intercession of any person of power on her behalf; that if any hope could possibly be entertained upon the point, it must be by working a change in the feelings of old G—— M——, and my father, and by prevailing on them to solicit from the lieutenant-general of police the revocation of Manon's sen-

tence. He offered to do everything in his power to gain over the younger G—— M——, although he fancied a coldness in that gentleman's manner towards him, probably from some suspicions he might entertain of his being concerned in the late affair; and he entreated me to lose no opportunity of effecting the desired change in my father's mind.

This was no easy undertaking for me; not only on account of the difficulty I should naturally meet in overcoming his opinion, but for another reason which made me fear even to approach him; I had quitted his lodgings contrary to his express orders, and was resolved, since I had learned the sad fate of my poor Manon, never again to return thither. I was not without apprehensions indeed of his now retaining me against my will, and perhaps taking me at once back with him into the country. My elder brother had formerly had recourse to this violent measure. True, I was now somewhat older; but age is a feeble argument against force. I hit upon a mode, however, of avoiding this danger, which was to get him by contrivance to some public place, and there announce myself to him under an assumed name: I immediately resolved on this method. M. de T—— went to G—— M——'s, and I to the Luxembourg, whence I sent my father word that a gentleman waited there to speak to him. I hardly thought he would come, as the night was advancing. He, however, soon made his appearance, followed by a servant: I begged of him to choose a walk where we could be alone. We walked at least a hundred paces without speaking. He doubtless imagined that so much precaution could not be taken without some important object. He waited for my opening speech, and I was meditating how to commence it.

At length I began.

Sir, said I, trembling, you are a good and affectionate parent; you have loaded me with favors, and have forgiven me an infinite number of faults; I also in my turn call Heaven to witness to the sincere, and tender, and respectful sentiments I entertain towards you. But it does seem to me, that your inexorable severity—

Well, sir, my severity! interrupted my father, who no doubt found my hesitation little suited to his impatience.

Ah, sir, I replied, it does seem to me that your severity is excessive in the penalty you inflict upon the unfortunate Manon. You have taken only M. G—— M——'s report

of her. His hatred had made him represent her to you in the most odious colors: you have formed a frightful idea of her. She is, on the contrary, the mildest and most amiable of living creatures; would that Heaven had but inspired you at any one moment with the desire of seeing her! I am convinced that you would be not less sensible of her perfections than your unhappy son. You would then have been her advocate; you would have abhorred the foul artifices of G—— M——; you would have had pity on both her and me. Alas; I am persuaded of it; your heart is not insensible: it must ere now have melted with compassion.

He interrupted me again, perceiving that I spoke with a warmth which would not allow me to finish very briefly. He begged to know with what request I intended to wind up so fervent a harangue.

To ask my life at your hands, said I, which I never can retain if Manon once embark for America.

No! no! replied he, in the severest tone; I would rather see you lifeless than infamous and depraved.

We have gone far enough then, said I, catching hold of his arm, take from me, in common mercy, my life! weary and odious and insupportable as it henceforward must be; for in the state of despair into which you now plunge me, death would be the greatest favor you could bestow,—a favor worthy of a father's hand.

I should only give you what you deserve, replied he; I know fathers who would not have shown as much patience as I have, but would themselves have executed speedy justice; but it is my foolish and excessive forbearance that has been your ruin.

I threw myself at his feet: ah! exclaimed I, if you have still any remains of mercy, do not harden your heart against my distress and sorrow. Remember that I am your child! Alas! think of my poor mother! you loved her tenderly! would you have suffered her to be torn from your arms! You would have defended her to the death! May not the same feeling then be pardoned in others? Can persons become barbarous and cruel, after having themselves experienced the softening influence of tenderness and grief?

Breathe not again the sacred name of your mother, he exclaimed, in a voice of thunder; the very allusion to her memory rouses my indignation. Had she lived to witness *the unredeemed* profligacy of your life, it would have

brought her in pain and sorrow to her grave.—Let us put an end to this discussion, he added; it distresses me, and makes not the slightest change in my determination: I am going back to my lodgings, and I desire you to follow me.

The cool and resolute tone in which he uttered this command convinced me that he was inexorable. I stepped some paces aside, for fear he should think fit to lay hands upon me.

Do not increase my misery and despair, said I to him, by forcing me to disobey you. It is impossible for me to follow you; and equally so that I should continue to live, after the unkind treatment I have experienced from you. I therefore bid you an eternal adieu. When you know that I am dead, as I shall soon be, the paternal affection which you once entertained for me may be perhaps revived.

As I was about to turn away from him: You refuse then to follow me, cried he, in a tone of excessive anger. Go! go on to your ruin. Adieu! ungrateful and disobedient boy.

Adieu! exclaimed I to him, in a burst of grief, adieu, cruel and unnatural father!

I left the Luxembourg, and rushed like a madman through the streets to M. de T——'s house. I raised my hands and eyes as I went along, invoking the Almighty Powers: O Heaven, cried I, will you not prove more merciful than man! The only hope that remains to me is from above!

M. de T—— had not yet returned home; but he arrived before many minutes had elapsed. His negotiation had been as unsuccessful as my own. He told me so with the most sorrowful countenance. Young G—— M——, although less irritated than his father against Manon and me, would not undertake to petition in our favor. He was, in great measure, deterred by the fear which he himself had of the vindictive old lecher, who had already vented his anger against him for his design of forming a connection with Manon.

There only remained to me, therefore, the violent measures which M. de T—— had suggested. I now confined all my hopes to them. They were, questionless, most uncertain; but they held out to me, at least, a substantial consolation, in the certainty of meeting death in the attempt, if unsuccessful. I left him, begging that he would offer up his best wishes for my triumph; and I thought

only of finding some companions, to whom I might communicate a portion of my own courage and determination.

The first that occurred to me was the same guardsman whom I had employed to arrest G—— M——. I had intended indeed to pass the night at his rooms, not having had a moment of leisure during the afternoon to procure myself a lodging. I found him alone. He was glad to see me out of the Châtelet. He made me an offer of his services. I explained to him in what way he might now do me the greatest kindness. He had good sense enough to perceive all the difficulties; but he was also generous enough to undertake to surmount them.

We spent part of the night in considering how the plot was to be executed. He spoke of the three soldiers whom he had made use of on the last occasion as men whose courage had been proved. M. de T—— had told me the exact number of archers that would escort Manon; they were but six. Five strong and determined men could not fail to strike terror into these fellows, who would never think of defending themselves bravely, when they were to be allowed the alternative of avoiding danger by surrendering; and of that they would no doubt avail themselves. As I was not without money, the guardsman advised me to spare no pains or expense to ensure success. We must be mounted, he said, and each man must have his carbine and pistols. I will take care to prepare everything requisite by to-morrow. We shall also want three new suits of regimentals for the soldiers, who dare not appear in an affray of this kind in the uniform of their regiment. I handed him the hundred pistoles which I had got from M. de T——: it was all expended the next morning, to the very last *sou*. I inspected the three soldiers; I animated them with the most liberal promises; and to confirm their confidence in me, I began by making each man a present of ten pistoles.

The momentous day having arrived, I sent one of them at an early hour to the hospital, to ascertain the exact time when the police were to start with their prisoners. Although I merely took this precaution from my excessive anxiety, it turned out to have been a prudent step. I had formed my plans upon false information, which I had received as to their destination; and believing that it was at Rochelle this unhappy group was to embark, all my trouble would have been thrown away in waiting for them on the *Orleans road.* However, I learned, by the soldier's report,

that they would go out towards Rouen, and that it was from Havre-de-Grace they were to sail for America.

We at once went to the gate of St. Honoré, taking care to go by different streets. We assembled at the end of the faubourg. Our horses were fresh. In a little time we observed before us the six archers and the two wretched caravans, which you saw at Passy two years ago. The sight alone almost deprived me of my strength and senses. O Fate! said I to myself, cruel Fate! grant me now either death or victory.

We hastily consulted as to the mode of making the attack. The cavalcade was only four hundred paces in advance, and we might intercept them by cutting across a small field, round which the highroad led. The guardsman was for this course, in order to fall suddenly upon them while unprepared. I approved of the plan, and was the first to spur my horse forward—but fate once again relentlessly blasted all my hopes.

The escort, seeing five horsemen riding towards them, inferred that it was for the purpose of attacking them. They put themselves in a position of defence, preparing their bayonets and guns with an air of resolution.

This demonstration, which in the guardsman and myself only inspired fresh courage, had a very different effect upon our three cowardly companions. They stopped simultaneously, and having muttered to each other some words which I could not hear, they turned their horses' heads, threw the bridles on their necks, and galloped back towards Paris.

Good Heavens! said the guardsman, who appeared as much annoyed as I was by this infamous desertion, what is to be done? we are but two now.

From rage and consternation I had lost all power of speech. I doubted whether my first revenge should not be in pursuing the cowards who had abandoned me. I saw them flying, and looked in the other direction at the escort; if it had been possible to divide myself, I should at once have fallen upon both these objects of my fury; I should have destroyed all at the same moment.

The guardsman, who saw my irresolution by my wandering gaze, begged of me to hear his advice. Being but two, he said, it would be madness to attack six men as well armed as ourselves, and who seem determined to receive us firmly. Let us return to Paris, and endeavor to succeed better in the choice of our comrades. The police cannc

make very rapid progress with two heavy vans; we may overtake them to-morrow without difficulty.

I reflected a moment on this suggestion; but seeing nothing around me but despair, I took a final and indeed desperate resolution: this was to thank my companion for his services, and, far from attacking the police, to go up with submission and implore them to receive me among them, that I might accompany Manon to Havre-de-Grace, and afterwards, if possible, cross the Atlantic with her. The whole world is either persecuting or betraying me, said I to the guardsman; I have no longer the power of interesting any one in my favor; I expect nothing more either from Fortune or the friendship of man; my misery is at its height; it only remains for me to submit, so that I close my eyes henceforward against every gleam of hope. May Heaven, I continued, reward you for your generosity! Adieu! I shall go and aid my wretched destiny in filling up the full measure of my ruin. He in vain endeavored to persuade me to return with him to Paris. I entreated him to leave me at once, lest the police should still suspect us of an intention to attack them.

CHAPTER XII

"The pauses and intermissions of pain become positive pleasures; and have thus a power of shedding a satisfaction over the intervals of ease, which few enjoyments exceed."—PALEY.

RIDING towards the cortège at a slow pace, and with a sorrowful countenance, the guards could hardly see anything very terrific in my approach. They seemed, however, to expect an attack. Be persuaded, gentlemen, said I to them, that I come not to wage war, but rather to ask favors. I then begged of them to continue their progress without any distrust, and as we went along I made my solicitations.

They consulted together to ascertain in what way they should entertain my request. The chief of them spoke for the rest. He said that the orders they had received to watch the prisoners vigilantly were of the strictest kind; that, however, I seemed so interesting a young man, that they might be induced to relax a little in their duty; but that I must know, of course, that this would cost me something. I had about sixteen pistoles left, and candidly told them what my purse contained. Well, said the gendarme, we will act generously. It shall only cost you a crown an hour for conversing with any of our girls that you may prefer,—that is the ordinary price in Paris.

I said not a word of Manon, because I did not wish to let them know of my passion. They at first supposed it was merely a boyish whim, that made me think of amusing myself with these creatures: but when they discovered that I was in love, they increased their demands in such a way, that my purse was completely empty on leaving Nantes, where we had slept the night before our arrival at Passy.

Shall I describe to you my heart-rending interviews with Manon during this journey, and what my sensations were when I obtained from the guards permission to approach her caravan? Oh! language never can adequately express the sentiments of the heart; but picture to yourself my poor mistress, with a chain round her waist, seated upon a handful of straw, her head resting languidly against the

panel of the carriage, her face pale and bathed with tears, which forced a passage between her eyelids, although she kept them continually closed. She had not even the curiosity to open her eyes on hearing the bustle of the guards when they expected our attack. Her clothes were soiled, and in disorder; her delicate hands exposed to the rough air; in fine, her whole angelic form, that face, lovely enough to carry back the world to idolatry, presented a spectacle of distress and anguish utterly indescribable.

I spent some moments gazing at her as I rode alongside the carriage. I had so lost my self-possession, that I was several times on the point of falling from my horse. My sighs and frequent exclamations at length attracted her attention. She looked at and recognized me, and I remarked that on the first impulse, she unconsciously tried to leap from the carriage towards me, but being checked by her chain, she fell into her former attitude.

I begged of the guards to stop one moment for the sake of mercy; they consented for the sake of avarice. I dismounted to go and sit near her. She was so languid and feeble, that she was for some time without the power of speech, and could not raise her hands: I bathed them with my tears; and being myself unable to utter a word, we formed together as deplorable a picture of distress as could well be seen. When at length we were able to speak, our conversation was not less sorrowful. Manon said little: shame and grief appeared to have altered the character of her voice; its tone was feeble and tremulous.

She thanked me for not having forgotten her, and for the comfort I gave her in allowing her to see me once more, and she then bade me a long and last farewell. But when I assured her that no power on earth could ever separate me from her, and that I was resolved to follow her to the extremity of the world,—to watch over her,—to guard her, —to love her,—and inseparably to unite my wretched destiny with hers,—the poor girl gave way to such feelings of tenderness and grief, that I almost dreaded danger to her life from the violence of her emotion; the agitation of her whole soul seemed intensely concentrated in her eyes; she fixed them steadfastly upon me. She more than once opened her lips without the power of giving utterance to her thoughts. I could, however, catch some expressions that dropped from her, of admiration and wonder at my excessive love,—of doubt that she could have been fortunate enough to inspire me with a passion so perfect,—of earnest

entreaty that I would abandon my intention of following her, and seek elsewhere a lot more worthy of me, and which, she said, I could never hope to find with her.

In spite of the cruellest inflictions of Fate, I derived comfort from her looks, and from the conviction that I now possessed her undivided affection. I had in truth lost all that other men value; but I was the master of Manon's heart, the only possession that I prized. Whether in Europe or in America, of what moment to me was the place of my abode, provided I might live happy in the society of my mistress? Is not the universe the residence of two fond and faithful lovers? Does not each find in the other father, mother, friends, relations, riches, felicity?

If anything caused me uneasiness, it was the fear of seeing Manon exposed to want. I fancied myself already with her in a barbarous country, inhabited by savages. I am quite certain, said I, there will be none there more cruel than G—— M—— and my father. They will, at least, allow us to live in peace. If the accounts we read of savages be true, they obey the laws of nature; they neither know the mean rapacity of avarice, nor the false and fantastic notions of dignity, which have raised me up an enemy in my own father. They will not harass and persecute two lovers, when they see us adopt their own simple habits. I was therefore at ease upon that point.

But my romantic ideas were not formed with a proper view to the ordinary wants of life. I had too often found that there were necessaries which could not be dispensed with, particularly by a young and delicate woman, accustomed to comfort and abundance. I was in despair at having so fruitlessly emptied my purse, and the little money that now remained was about being forced from me by the rascally imposition of the gendarmes. I imagined that a very trifling sum would suffice for our support for some time in America, where money was scarce, and might also enable me to form some undertaking there for our permanent establishment.

This idea made me resolve on writing to Tiberge, whom I had ever found ready to hold out the generous hand of friendship. I wrote from the first town we passed through. I only alluded to the destitute condition in which I foresaw that I should find myself on arriving at Havre-de-Grace, to which place I acknowledged that I was accompanying Manon. I asked him for only fifty pistoles. You can remit it to me, said I to him, through the hands of the

postmaster. You must perceive that it is the last time I can by possibility trespass on your friendly kindness; and my poor unhappy mistress being about to be exiled from her country for ever, I cannot let her depart without supplying her with some few comforts, to soften the sufferings of her lot, as well as to assuage my own sorrows.

The gendarmes became so rapacious when they saw the violence of my passion, continually increasing their demands for the slightest favors, that they soon left me penniless. Love did not permit me to put any bounds to my liberality. At Manon's side I was not master of myself; and it was no longer by the hour that time was measured; rather by the duration of whole days. At length, my funds being completely exhausted, I found myself exposed to the brutal caprice of these six wretches, who treated me with intolerable rudeness—you yourself witnessed it at Passy. My meeting with you was a momentary relaxation accorded me by Fate. Your compassion at the sight of my sufferings was my only recommendation to your generous nature. The assistance which you so liberally extended, enabled me to reach Havre, and the guards kept their promise more faithfully than I had ventured to hope.

We arrived at Havre. I went to the post-office: Tiberge had not yet had time to answer my letter. I ascertained the earliest day I might reckon upon his answer: it could not possibly arrive for two days longer; and by an extraordinary fatality, our vessel was to sail on the very morning of the day when the letter might be expected. I cannot give you an idea of my despair. Alas! cried I, even amongst the unfortunate, I am to be ever the most wretched!

Manon replied: Alas! does a life so thoroughly miserable deserve the care we bestow on ours? Let us die at Havre, dearest Chevalier! Let death at once put an end to our afflictions! Shall we persevere, and go to drag on this hopeless existence in an unknown land, where we shall, no doubt, have to encounter the most horrible pains, since it has been their object to punish me by exile. Let us die, she repeated, or do at least in mercy rid me of life, and then you can seek another lot in the arms of some happier sweetheart.

No, no, Manon, said I, it is but too enviable a lot, in my estimation, to be allowed to share your misfortunes.

Her observations made me tremble. I saw that she was

overpowered by her afflictions. I tried to assume a more tranquil air, in order to dissipate such melancholy thoughts of death and despair. I resolved to adopt the same course in future; and I learned by the results, that nothing is more calculated to inspire a woman with courage than the demonstration of intrepidity in the man she loves.

When I lost all hope of receiving the expected assistance from Tiberge, I sold my horse; the money it brought, joined to what remained of your generous gift, amounted to the small sum of forty pistoles; I expended eight in the purchase of some necessary articles for Manon; and I put the remainder by, as the capital upon which we were to rest our hopes and raise our fortunes in America. I had no difficulty in getting admitted on board the vessel. They were at the time looking for young men as voluntary emigrants to the colony. The passage and provisions were supplied gratis. I left a letter for Tiberge, which was to go by the post next morning to Paris. It was no doubt written in a tone calculated to affect him deeply, since it induced him to form a resolution, which could only be carried into execution by the tenderest and most generous sympathy for his unhappy friend.

CHAPTER XIII

"Sunt hic etiam sua præmia laudi,
Sunt lachrymæ rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt."
—VIRGIL.

"E'en the mute walls relate the victim's fame,
And sinner's tears the good man's pity claim."
—DRYDEN.

WE set sail; the wind continued favorable during the entire passage. I obtained from the captain's kindness a separate cabin for the use of Manon and myself. He was so good as to distinguish us from the herd of our miserable associates. I took an opportunity, on the second day, of conciliating his attentions, by telling him part of our unfortunate history. I did not feel that I was guilty of any very culpable falsehood in saying that I was the husband of Manon. He appeared to believe it, and promised me his protection; and indeed we experienced, during the whole passage, the most flattering evidences of his sincerity. He took care that our table was comfortably provided; and his attentions procured us the marked respect of our companions in misery. The unwearied object of my solicitude was to save Manon from every inconvenience. She felt this, and her gratitude, together with a lively sense of the singular position in which I had placed myself solely for her sake, rendered the dear creature so tender and impassioned, so attentive also to my most trifling wants, that it was between us a continual emulation of attentions and of love. I felt no regret at quitting Europe; on the contrary, the nearer we approached America, the more did I feel my heart expand and become tranquil. If I had not felt a dread of our perhaps wanting by-and-by the absolute necessaries of life, I should have been grateful to Fate for having at length given so favorable a turn to our affairs.

After a passage of two months, we at length reached the banks of the desired river. The country offered at first sight nothing agreeable. We saw only sterile and uninhabited plains, covered with rushes, and some trees rooted

up by the wind. No trace either of men or animals. However, the captain having discharged some pieces of artillery, we presently observed a group of the inhabitants of New Orleans, who approached us with evident signs of joy. We had not perceived the town: it is concealed upon the side on which we approached it by a hill. We were received as persons dropped from the clouds.

The poor inhabitants hastened to put a thousand questions to us upon the state of France, and of the different provinces in which they were born. They embraced us as brothers, and as beloved companions, who had come to share their pains and their solitude. We turned towards the town with them; but we were astonished to perceive, as we advanced, that what we had hitherto heard spoken of as a respectable town, was nothing more than a collection of miserable huts. They were inhabited by five or six hundred persons. The governor's house was a little distinguished from the rest by its height and position. It was surrounded by some earthen ramparts, and a deep ditch.

We were first presented to him. He continued for some time in conversation with the captain; and then advancing towards us, he looked attentively at the women one after another; there were thirty of them, for another troop of convicts had joined us at Havre. After having thus inspected them, he sent for several young men of the colony who were desirous to marry. He assigned the handsomest women to the principal of these, and the remainder were disposed of by lot. He had not yet addressed Manon; but having ordered the others to depart, he made us remain. I learn from the captain, said he, that you are married, and he is convinced by your conduct on the passage that you are both persons of merit and of education. I have nothing to do with the cause of your misfortunes; but if it be true that you are as conversant with the world and society as your appearance would indicate, I shall spare no pains to soften the severity of your lot, and you may on your part contribute towards rendering this savage and desert abode less disagreeable to me.

I replied in the manner which I thought best calculated to confirm the opinion he had formed of us. He gave orders to have a habitation prepared for us in the town, and detained us to supper. I was really surprised to find so much politeness in a governor of transported convicts. *In the presence* of others he abstained from inquiring about *our past adventures*. The conversation was general; and

in spite of our degradation, Manon and I exerted ourselves to make it lively and agreeable.

At night we were conducted to the lodgings prepared for us. We found a wretched hovel composed of planks and mud, containing three rooms on the ground, and a loft overhead. He had sent there six chairs, and some few necessaries of life.

Manon appeared frightened by the first view of this melancholy dwelling. It was on my account, much more than upon her own, that she distressed herself. When we were left to ourselves, she sat down and wept bitterly. I attempted at first to console her; but when she enabled me to understand that it was for my sake she deplored our privations, and that in our common afflictions she only considered me as the sufferer, I put on an air of resolution, and even of content, sufficient to encourage her.

What is there in my lot to lament? said I; I possess all that I have ever desired. You love me, Manon, do you not? What happiness beyond this have I ever longed for? Let us leave to Providence the direction of our destiny; it by no means appears to me so desperate. The governor is civil and obliging; he has already given us marks of his consideration; he will not allow us to want for necessaries. As to our rude hut and the squalidness of our furniture, you might have noticed that there are few persons in the colony better lodged or more comfortably furnished than we are: and then you are an admirable chemist, added I, embracing her; you transform everything into gold.

In that case, she answered, you shall be the richest man in the universe; for, as there never was love surpassing yours, so it is impossible for man to be loved more tenderly than you are by me. I well know, she continued, that I have never merited the almost incredible fidelity and attachment which you have shown for me. I have often caused you annoyances, which nothing but excessive fondness could have induced you to pardon. I have been thoughtless and volatile; and even while loving you, as I have always done to distraction, I was never free from a consciousness of ingratitude. But you cannot believe how much my nature is altered; those tears which you have so frequently seen me shed since quitting the French shore have not been caused by my own misfortunes. Since you began to share them with me, I have been a stranger to selfishness: I only wept from tenderness and compassion for you. I am inconsolable at the thought of having given

you one instant's pain during my past life. I never cease upbraiding myself with my former inconstancy, and wondering at the sacrifices which love has induced you to make for a miserable and unworthy wretch, who could not, with the last of her blood, compensate for half the torments she has caused you.

Her grief, the language, and the tone in which she expressed herself, made such an impression, that I felt my heart ready to break within me. Take care, said I to her, take care, dear Manon; I have not strength to endure such exciting remarks of your affection; I am little accustomed to the rapturous sensations which you now kindle in my heart. O Heaven! cried I, I have now nothing further to ask of you. I am sure of Manon's love. That has been alone wanting to complete my happiness; I can now never cease to be happy: my felicity is well secured.

It is indeed, she replied, if it depends upon me, and I well know where I can be ever certain of finding my own happiness centered.

With these ideas, capable of turning my hut into a palace worthy of earth's proudest monarch, I lay down to rest. America appeared to my view the true land of milk and honey, the abode of contentment and delight. People should come to New Orleans, I often said to Manon, who wish to enjoy the real rapture of love! It is here that love is divested of all selfishness, all jealousy, all inconstancy. Our countrymen come here in search of gold; they little think that we have discovered treasures of inestimably greater value.

We carefully cultivated the governor's friendship. He bestowed upon me, a few weeks after our arrival, a small appointment which became vacant in the fort. Although not one of any distinction, I gratefully accepted it as a gift of Providence, as it enabled me to live independently of others' aid. I took a servant for myself, and a woman for Manon. Our little establishment became settled: nothing could surpass the regularity of my conduct, or that of Manon; we lost no opportunity of serving or doing an act of kindness to our neighbors. This friendly disposition, and the mildness of our manners, secured us the confidence and affection of the whole colony. We soon became so respected, that we ranked as the principal persons in the town after the governor.

The simplicity of our habits and occupations, and the erfect innocence in which we lived, revived insensibly or

early feelings of devotion. Manon had never been an irreligious girl, and I was far from being one of those reckless libertines who delight in adding impiety and sacrilege to moral depravity: all the disorders of our lives might be fairly ascribed to the natural influences of youth and love. Experience had now begun with us to do the office of age; it produced the same effect upon us as years must have done. Our conversation, which was generally of a serious turn, by degrees engendered a longing for virtuous love. I first proposed this change to Manon. I knew the principles of her heart; she was frank and natural in all her sentiments, qualities which invariably predisposed to virtue. I said to her that there was but one thing wanting to complete our happiness; it is, said I, to invoke upon our union the benediction of Heaven. We have both of us hearts too sensitive and minds too refined to continue voluntarily in the wilful violation of so sacred a duty. It signifies nothing our having lived while in France in such a manner, because there it was as impossible for us not to love as to be united by a legitimate tie: but in America, where we are under no restraint, where we owe no allegiance to the arbitrary distinctions of birth and aristocratic prejudice, where besides we are already supposed to be married, why should we not actually become so,—why should we not sanctify our love by the holy ordinances of religion? As for me, I added, I offer nothing new in offering you my hand and my heart; but I am ready to ratify it at the foot of the altar.

This speech seemed to inspire her with joy. Would you believe it, she replied, I have thought of this a thousand times since our arrival in America? The fear of annoying you has kept it shut up in my breast. I felt that I had no pretensions to aspire to the character of your wife.

Ah, Manon! said I, you should very soon be a sovereign's consort if I had been born to the inheritance of a crown. Let us not hesitate; we have no obstacle to impede us: I will this day speak to the governor on the subject and acknowledge that we have in this particular hitherto deceived him. Let us leave, added I, to vulgar lovers the dread of the indissoluble bonds of marriage;[1] they would not fear them if they were assured as we are of the continuance of those of love. I left *Manon* enchanted by this resolution.

I am persuaded that no honest man could disapprove of

[1]*Some say that* Love, at sight of human ties,
Spreads his light wings, and in a moment flies.

this intention in my present situation; that is to say, fatally enslaved as I was by a passion which I could not subdue, and visited by compunction and remorse which I ought not to stifle. But will any man charge me with injustice or impiety if I complain of the rigor of Heaven in defeating a design that I could only have formed with the view of conciliating its favor and complying with its decrees? Alas! do I say defeated? nay, punished as a new crime. I was patiently permitted to go blindly along the high road of vice; and the cruellest chastisements were reserved for the period when I was returning to the paths of virtue. I now fear that I shall have hardly fortitude enough left to recount the most disastrous circumstances that ever occurred to any man.

I waited upon the governor, as I had settled with Manon, to procure his consent to the ceremony of our marriage. I should have avoided speaking to him or to any other person upon the subject, if I had imagined that his chaplain, who was the only minister in the town, would have performed the office for me without his knowledge; but not daring to hope that he would do so privately, I determined to act ingenuously in the matter.

The governor had a nephew named Synnelet, of whom he was particularly fond. He was about thirty; brave, but of a headstrong and violent disposition. He was not married. Manon's beauty had struck him on the first day of our arrival; and the numberless opportunities he had of seeing her during the last nine or ten months had so inflamed his passion, that he was absolutely pining for her in secret. However, as he was convinced, in common with his uncle and the whole colony, that I was married, he put such a restraint upon his feelings, that they remained generally unnoticed; and he lost no opportunity of showing the most disinterested friendship for me.

He happened to be with his uncle when I arrived at the government house. I had no reason for keeping my intention a secret from him, so that I explained myself without hesitation in his presence. The governor heard me, with his usual kindness. I related to him a part of my history, to which he listened with evident interest; and when I requested his presence at the intended ceremony, he was so generous as to say that he must be permitted to defray the expenses of the succeeding entertainment. I retired perfectly satisfied.

In an hour after, the chaplain paid me a visit. I though

he was come to prepare me by religious instruction for the sacred ceremony; but, after a cold salutation, he announced to me in two words that the governor desired I would relinquish all thoughts of such a thing, for that he had other views for Manon.

Other views for Manon! said I, as I felt my heart sink within me; what views can they be, chaplain?

He replied, that I must be of course aware that the governor was absolute master here; that Manon, having been transported from France to the colony, was entirely at his disposal; that hitherto he had not exercised his right, believing that she was a married woman; but that now, having learned from my own lips that it was not so, he had resolved to assign her to M. Synnelet, who was passionately in love with her.

My indignation overcame my prudence. Irritated as I was, I desired the chaplain instantly to quit my house, swearing at the same time that neither governor, Synnelet, nor the whole colony together, should lay hands upon my wife, or mistress, if they chose so to call her.

I immediately told Manon of the distressing message I had just received. We conjectured that Synnelet had warped his uncle's mind after my departure, and that it was all the effect of a premeditated design. They were, questionless, the stronger party. We found ourselves in New Orleans, as in the midst of the ocean, separated from the rest of the world by an immense interval of space. In a country perfectly unknown, a desert, or inhabited, if not by brutes, at least by savages quite as ferocious, to what corner could we fly? I was respected in the town, but I could not hope to excite the people in my favor to such a degree as to derive assistance from them proportioned to the impending danger: money was requisite for that purpose, and I was poor. Besides, the success of a popular commotion was uncertain; and if we failed in the attempt, our doom would be inevitably sealed.

I revolved these thoughts in my mind; I mentioned them in part to Manon; I found new ones, without waiting for her replies; I determined upon one course, and then abandoned that to adopt another; I talked to myself, and answered my own thoughts aloud: at length I sunk into a kind of hysterical stupor that I can compare to nothing, *because nothing* ever equaled it. Manon observed my *emotion, and* from its violence, judged how imminent was *our danger;* and, apprehensive more on my account than

her own, the dear girl could not even venture to give expression to her fears.

After a multitude of reflections, I resolved to call upon the governor, and appeal to his feelings of honor, to the recollection of my unvarying respect for him, and the marks he had given of his own affection for us both. Manon endeavored to dissuade me from this attempt: she said, with tears in her eyes, You are rushing into the jaws of death; they will murder you—I shall never again see you—I am determined to die before you. I had great difficulty in persuading her that it was absolutely necessary that I should go, and that she should remain at home. I promised that she should see me again in a few moments. She did not foresee, nor did I, that it was against herself the whole anger of Heaven, and the rabid fury of our enemies, was about to be concentrated.

I went to the fort: the governor was there with his chaplain. I supplicated him in a tone of humble submission that I could have ill brooked under other circumstances. I invoked his clemency by every argument calculated to soften any heart less ferocious and cruel than a tiger's.

The barbarian made to all my prayers but two short answers, which he repeated over and over again. Manon, he said, was at his disposal: and he had given a promise to his nephew. I was resolved to command my feelings to the last: I merely replied, that I had imagined he was too sincerely my friend to desire my death, to which I would infinitely rather consent than to the loss of my mistress.

I felt persuaded, on quitting him, that it was folly to expect anything from the obstinate tyrant, who would have damned himself a hundred times over to please his nephew. However, I persevered in restraining my temper to the end; deeply resolved, if they persisted in such flagrant injustice, to make America the scene of one of the most horrible and bloody murders that even love had ever led to.

I was, on my return home, meditating upon this design, when Fate, as if impatient to expedite my ruin, threw Synnelet in my way. He read in my countenance a portion of my thoughts. I before said, he was brave. He approached me.

Are you not seeking me? he inquired. I know that my intentions have given you mortal offence, and that the death of one of us in indispensable: let us see who is to be the *happy man.*

I replied that such was unquestionably the fact, and that nothing but death could end the difference between us.

We retired about one hundred paces out of the town. We drew: I wounded and disarmed him at the first onset. He was so enraged, that he peremptorily refused either to ask his life or renounce his claims to Manon. I might have been perhaps justified in ending both by a single blow; but noble blood ever vindicates its origin. I threw him back his sword. Let us renew the struggle, said I to him, and remember that there shall be now no quarter. He attacked me with redoubled fury. I must confess that I was not an accomplished swordsman, having had but three months' tuition at Paris. Love, however, guided my weapon, Synnelet pierced me through and through the left arm; but I caught him whilst thus engaged, and made so vigorous a thrust that I stretched him senseless at my feet.

In spite of the triumphant feeling that victory, after a mortal conflict, inspires, I was immediately horrified by the certain consequences of this death. There could not be the slightest hope of either pardon or respite from the vengeance I had thus incurred. Aware as I was of the affection of the governor for his nephew, I felt perfectly sure that my death would not be delayed a single hour after his should become known. Urgent as this apprehension was, it still was by no means the principal source of my uneasiness. Manon, the welfare of Manon, the peril that impended over her, and the certainty of my being now at length separated from her, afflicted me to such a degree, that I was incapable of recognizing the place in which I stood. I regretted Synnelet's death: instant suicide seemed the only remedy for my woes.

However, it was this very thought that quickly restored me to my reason, and enabled me to form a resolution. What, said I to myself, die, in order to end my pain! Then there is something I dread more than the loss of all I love! No, let me suffer the cruelest extremities in order to aid her; and when these prove of no avail, fly to death as a last resource!

I returned towards the town; on my arrival at home, I found Manon half dead with fright and anxiety: my presence restored her. I could not conceal from her the terrible accident that had happened. On my mentioning the death of Synnelet and my own wound, she fell in a state of insensibility into my arms. It was a quarter of an hour *before I could* bring her again to her senses.

I was myself in a most deplorable state of mind; I could not discern the slightest prospect of safety for either of us. Manon, said I to her, when she had recovered a little, what shall we do? Alas, what hope remains to us? I must necessarily fly. Will you remain in the town? Yes, dearest Manon, do remain; you may possibly still be happy here; while I, far away from you, may seek death and find it amongst the savages, or the wild beasts.

She raised herself in spite of her weakness, and taking hold of my hand led me towards the door: Let us, said she, fly together, we have not a moment to lose; Synnelet's body may be found by chance, and we shall then have no time to escape. But dear Manon, replied I, to what place can we fly? Do you perceive any resource? Would it not be better that you should endeavor to live on without me; and that I should go and voluntarily place my life in the governor's hands?

This proposal had only the effect of making her more impatient for our departure. I had presence of mind enough, on going out, to take with me some strong liquors which I had in my chamber, and as much food as I could carry in my pockets. We told our servants, who were in the adjoining room, that we were going to take our evening walk, as was our invariable habit; and we left the town behind us more rapidly than I had thought possible from Manon's delicate state of health.

Although I had not formed any resolve as to our future destination, I still cherished a hope, without which I should have infinitely preferred death, to my suspense about Manon's safety. I had acquired a sufficient knowledge of the country, during nearly ten months which I had now passed in America, to know in what manner the natives should be approached. Death was not the necessary consequence of falling into their hands. I had learned a few words of their language, and some of their customs, having had many opportunities of seeing them.

Besides this sad resource, I derived some hopes from the fact, that the English had, like ourselves, established colonies in this part of the New World. But the distance was terrific. In order to reach them, we should have to traverse deserts of many days' journey, and more than one range of mountains so steep and vast as to seem almost impassable to the strongest man. I nevertheless flattered myself that we might derive partial relief from one or other

of these sources; the savages might serve us as guides, and the English receive us in their settlements.

We journeyed on as long as Manon's strength would permit, that is to say, about six miles; for this incomparable creature, with her usual absence of selfishness, refused my repeated entreaties to stop. Overpowered at length by fatigue, she acknowledged the utter impossibility of proceeding further. It was already night: we sat down in the midst of an extensive plain, where we could not even find a tree to shelter us. Her first care was to dress my wound, which she had bandaged before our departure. I in vain entreated her to desist from exertion: it would only have added to her distress if I had refused her the satisfaction of seeing me at ease and out of danger, before her own wants were attended to. I allowed her therefore to gratify herself, and in shame and silence submitted to her delicate attentions.

But when she had completed her tender task, with what ardor did I not enter upon mine! I took off my clothes and stretched them under her, to render more endurable the hard and rugged ground on which she lay. I protected her delicate hands from the cold by my burning kisses and the warmth of my sighs. I passed the live-long night in watching over her as she slept, and praying Heaven to refresh her with soft and undisturbed repose. You can bear witness, just and all-seeing God! to the fervor and sincerity of those prayers, and thou alone knowest with what awful rigor they were rejected.

You will excuse me, if I now cut short a story which it distresses me beyond endurance to relate. It is, I believe, a calamity without parallel. I can never cease to deplore it. But although it continues, of course, deeply and indelibly impressed on my memory, yet my heart seems to shrink within me each time that I attempt the recital.

We had thus tranquilly passed the night. I had fondly imagined that my beloved mistress was in a profound sleep, and I hardly dared breathe lest I should disturb her.

As day broke, I observed that her hands were cold and trembling; I pressed them to my bosom in the hope of restoring animation. This movement roused her attention, and making an effort to grasp my hand, she said, in a feeble voice, that she thought her last moments had arrived.

I at first took this for a passing weakness, or the ordinary language of distress; and I answered with the usu consolations that love prompted. But her incessant si

her silence, and inattention to my inquiries, the convulsed grasp of her hands, in which she retained mine, soon convinced me that the crowning end of all my miseries was approaching.

Do not now expect me to attempt a description of my feelings, or to repeat her dying expressions. I lost her—I received the purest assurances of her love even at the very instant that her spirit fled. I have not nerve to say more upon this fatal and disastrous event.

My spirit was not destined to accompany Manon's. Doubtless, Heaven did not as yet consider me sufficiently punished, and therefore ordained that I should continue to drag on a languid and joyless existence. I willingly renounced every hope of leading a happy one.

I remained for twenty-four hours without taking my lips from the still beauteous countenance and hands of my adored Manon. My intention was to await my own death in that position; but at the beginning of the second day, I reflected that, after I was gone, she must of necessity become the prey of wild beasts. I then determined to bury her, and wait my own doom upon her grave. I was already, indeed, so near my end from the combined effect of long fasting and grief, that it was with the greatest difficulty I could support myself standing. I was obliged to have recourse to the liquors which I had brought with me, and these restored sufficient strength to enable me to set about my last sad office. From the sandy nature of the soil there was little trouble in opening the ground. I broke my sword and used it for the purpose; but my bare hands were of greater service. I dug a deep grave, and there deposited the idol of my heart, after having wrapped around her my clothes to prevent the sand from touching her. I kissed her ten thousand times with all the ardor of the most glowing love, before I laid her in this melancholy bed. I sat for some time upon the bank intently gazing on her, and could not command fortitude enough to close the grave over her. At length, feeling that my strength was giving way, and apprehensive of its being entirely exhausted before the completion of my task, I committed to the earth all that it had ever contained most perfect and peerless. I then lay myself with my face down upon the grave, and closing my eyes with the determination never again to open them, I invoked the mercy of Heaven, and ardently prayed for death.

You will find it difficult to believe that, during the whc

time of this protracted and distressing ceremony, not a tear or a sigh escaped to relieve my agony. The state of profound affliction in which I was, and the deep settled resolution I had taken to die, had silenced the sighs of despair, and effectually dried up the ordinary channels of grief. It was thus impossible for me, in this posture upon the grave, to continue for any time in possession of my faculties.

After what you have listened to, the remainder of my own history would ill repay the attention you seem inclined to bestow upon it. Synnelet having been carried into the town and skilfully examined, it was found that, so far from being dead, he was not even dangerously wounded. He informed his uncle of the manner in which the affray had occurred between us, and he generously did justice to my conduct on the occasion. I was sent for; and as neither of us could be found, our flight was immediately suspected. It was then too late to attempt to trace me, but the next day and the following one were employed in the pursuit.

I was found, without any appearance of life, upon the grave of Manon: and the persons who discovered me in this situation, seeing that I was almost naked and bleeding from my wounds, naturally supposed that I had been robbed and assassinated. They carried me into the town. The motion restored me to my senses. The sighs I heaved on opening my eyes and finding myself still amongst the living, showed that I was not beyond the reach of art: they were but too successful in its application.

I was immediately confined as a close prisoner. My trial was ordered; and as Manon was not forthcoming, I was accused of having murdered her from rage and jealousy. I naturally related all that had occurred. Synnelet, though bitterly grieved and disappointed by what he heard, had the generosity to solicit my pardon: he obtained it.

I was so reduced, that they were obliged to carry me from the prison to my bed, and there I suffered for three long months under severe illness. My aversion to life knew no diminution. I continually prayed for death, and obstinately for some time refused every remedy. But Providence, after having punished me with atoning rigor, saw fit to turn to my own use its chastisements and the memory of my multiplied sorrows. It at length deigned to shed upon me its redeeming light, and revived in my mind ideas worthy of my birth and my early education.

My tranquillity of mind being again restored, my c

speedily followed. I began only to feel the highest aspirations of honor, and diligently performed the duties of my appointment, whilst expecting the arrival of the vessels from France, which were always due at this period of the year. I resolved to return to my native country, there to expiate the scandal of my former life by my future good conduct. Synnelet had the remains of my dear mistress removed into a more hallowed spot.

It was six weeks after my recovery that, one day, walking alone upon the banks of the river, I saw a vessel arrive, which some mercantile speculation had directed to New Orleans. I stood by whilst the passengers landed. Judge my surprise on recognizing Tiberge amongst those who proceeded towards the town. This ever-faithful friend knew me at a distance, in spite of the ravages which care and sorrow had worked upon my countenance. He told me that the sole object of his voyage had been to see me once more, and to induce me to return with him to France; that on receipt of the last letter which I had written to him from Havre, he started for that place, and was himself the bearer of the succor which I solicited; that he had been sensibly affected on learning of my departure, and that he would have instantly followed me, if there had been a vessel bound for the same destination; that he had been for several months endeavoring to hear of one in the various seaport towns, and that, having at length found one at St. Malo which was weighing anchor for Martinique, he embarked, in the expectation of easily passing from thence to New Orleans; that the St. Malo vessel having been captured by Spanish pirates and taken to one of their islands, he had contrived to escape; and that, in short, after many adventures, he had gone on board the vessel which had just arrived, and at length happily attained his object.

I was totally unable adequately to express my feelings of gratitude to this generous and unshaken friend. I conducted him to my house, and placed all I possessed at his service. I related to him every circumstance that had occurred to me since I left France; and in order to gladden him with tidings which I knew he did not expect, I assured him that the seeds of virtue which he had in former days implanted in my heart, were now about to produce fruit, of which even he should be proud. He declared to me, that this gladdening announcement more than repaid him for all the fatigue and 'rouble he had endured.

We passed two months together at New Orleans whil

ting the departure of a vessel direct to France; and hav-
at length sailed, we landed only a fortnight since at
vre-de-Grace. On my arrival I wrote to my family. By
tter from my elder brother, I there learned of my father's
th, which, I dread to think, the disorders of my youth
ht have hastened. The wind being favorable for Calais,
nbarked for this port, and am now going to the house of
of my relations who lives a few miles off, where my
ther said that he should anxiously await my arrival.

THE END.

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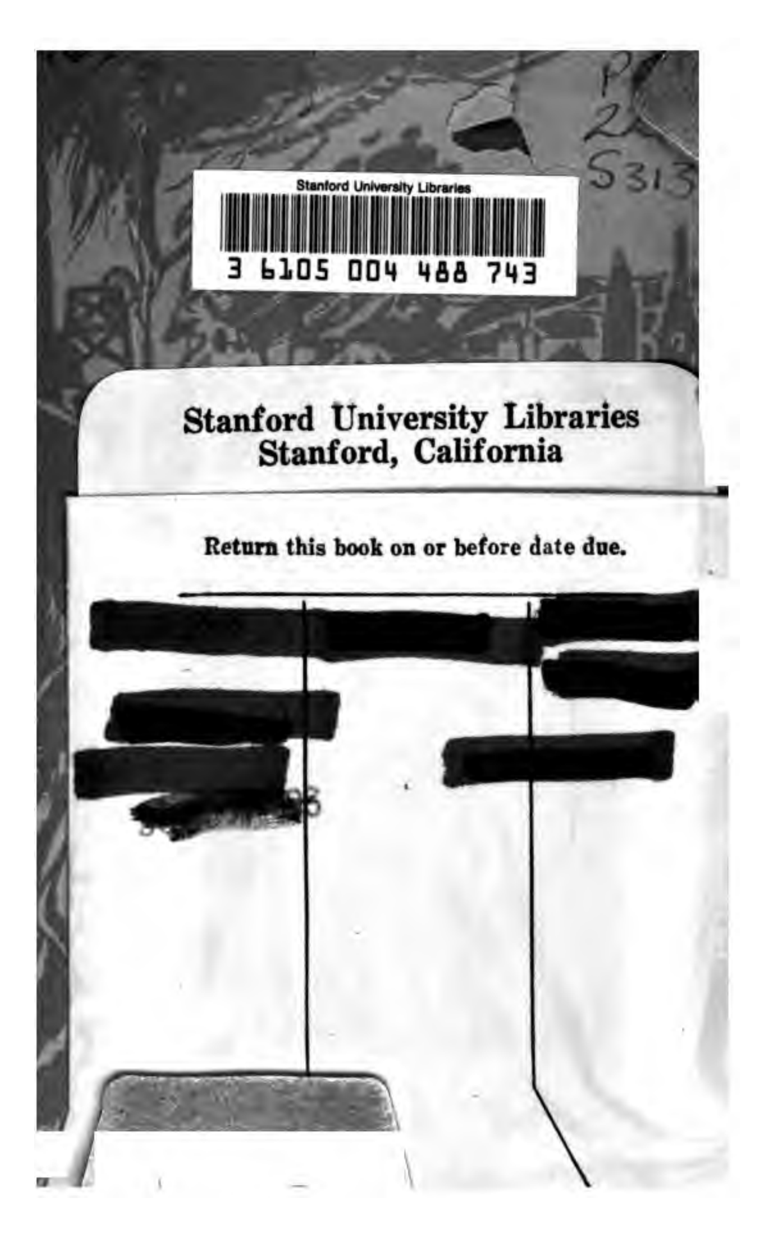
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